



A Weekend Ruse

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An Older!Pinecest Fic



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Intro

Applying to colleges wasn't as stressful as Dipper had initially thought it would be. He had actually started applying rather early, or at least it seemed like he did since all his peers were scrambling to send things off at the end of the school year.

He had tried not to fret over getting in. He's a smart guy. Almost all of his classes are on an AP level! And okay, he didn't have as many extracurricular activities as his sister Mabel (her list of clubs, teams and committees could fill a whole page. And he would know, since he had been the one to type up her résumé) but he was on the Math Team and Science Olympiad. He had also tried to join the school's book club with Mabel, but that had been a bust since it was mainly just girls gushing over Gerard and planning to see the latest *Wolf-Man Bare-Chest* movie. Every now and then he attended an Astronomy club meeting. Dipper would have gone more regularly, but the leader of the club was a girl named Lavender. She looked like a mix between a grunge and hippie, and either way she just didn't look like someone from the new/current millennium. Which, granted, didn't really bother Dipper as much the fact that she smelled like she rolled in a dumpster after smoking pot. Plus she was way more interested in horoscopes than in constellations and eclipses.

Dipper's community service hours ranked in at the grand total of *zilch*. Between college level courses, projects, and winning math competitions, Dipper honestly just wanted to use his free time to read and lounge about. When he was waiting for colleges to reply, his mind would zero in on his lack of service hours. There's probably some kid out there who took on a workload exactly like Dipper's, *but* had squeezed in time to pick up trash on the side of the road. That's the guy who'll get accepted, and Dipper's application would get tossed in the trash. God, maybe he should have picked up more trash.

Mabel picked up trash.

She helped cleaned up and beautify a neighborhood park, but Dipper thinks that had been done moreover as a pretense. He was pretty sure she had done it to talk to 'boys that care', or at least look at them while they planted flowers without shirts on. Ugh, why do

those muscle-ly guys need to take off their shirts anyway? We get it, you have muscles. They flex and whatnot. Why can't they keep their clothes on like normal people, like non muscle-ly Dipper.

In the end, Dipper got accepted or at least waitlisted to every college he applied to, including his first choice which offered him a scholarship.

With all that time spent trying to *not* worry about his acceptance letters, he hadn't even thought about Mabel getting accepted to a college... on the other side of the country.

"It won't be so bad," Dipper had tried to reason when the joy of getting into their dream schools had quickly spiraled into separation anxiety. The geographical aspect of going to different colleges hit them hard like a wave of freezing water. "There's Thanksgiving, and Christmas. And we got all of summer! We could even go visit Grunkle Stan, just like old times."

They never really had been apart before, especially not as long as a whole school semester. Even in high school with all their different friends and interests, they always considered each other to be their best friend. Always got to see each other, talk to each other, hang out, help each other out with work and projects, and their senior year (the first time they didn't have at least one class together) he might have used his study block to chat with her during her art class instead of actually studying.

So being miles away from each other was a scary, all consuming thing that weighed down on their chests and made packing up their rooms rather painful.

"Y-yeah," Mabel had agreed, but her voice still had a pinch of worry in it. Much like Dipper's had. "It's not like we won't see each other ever again. And—*pfft*—come on, Dip, it's two thousand—whatever! We can text, and Skype and junk. Like, all the time!"

"Well, not *all* the time," Dipper had reasoned, his mind already trying to workout a calling schedule.

Her school year started a week earlier than his, and after helping her move into her freshmen dorm, he had to admit that it didn't feel like the end of everything as he knew it (even if it kind of is). Their parents had gone out to find a McDonald's, and Mabel's roommate had yet to make an appearance (the other side of the room empty, except a bare cot). The siblings sat alone on the edge of her new bed, fingers intertwined as they watch Mabel's tiny, pink TV. She leans into him, head resting on his shoulder, her warmth sinking into him. He could smell the mix of her strawberry shampoo and vanilla lotion, and its such a comforting scent that it forces him to relax (as it always did) and he rested his head atop of hers, inhaling her for the last time. Or at least until Thanksgiving.

She gave his hand a squeeze, and he'd replied by squeezing back, tightening their hold on each other.

It won't be that bad. It won't be too different. They could call and text and chat anytime they wanted. They actually have a plan in place to call each other every day. And with all their school work and making new friends, they won't have time to miss each other.

But still...

"I'm going to miss you, Mabel."

She pulled away from his shoulder, forcing him to sit up. She had smiled at him, because it was the first time either of them had admitted it. They had been trying so hard to come up with ways to not miss each other, trying so hard to convince themselves that the world isn't ending. And maybe it's not ending, but it's nice to really acknowledge this thing bearing down on their chests.

So she kissed his left cheek. And then his right. She tapped his nose with her pointer finger, and he smiles back at her. Her eyes dropped down to his mouth, and then her lips were pressed against his, ending a second later with a cutesy *mwah* sound effect.

He laughed because he didn't really know what else to do. Their hands had slackened at some point, so he made the grip firm again. Her thumb made lazy circles over his knuckles. "I'm gonna miss you too, Bro."

The sweet taste of her lip-gloss lingered for days, and he didn't really understand why that didn't bother him.

Part 1

Now, a year later, Dipper has to admit to liking college life, mainly because of the little things. He likes that his mom isn't around to complain about all his dirty laundry. He likes that he can have his classes scheduled for the afternoon, even though his dad somehow managed to guilt him into taking the morning classes instead (but having the option is still nice). He likes staying up late, watching shows and playing video games with his roommate Jean... Not that he's been able to hang with Jean all that much the past semester. Not since Jean started dating Ann, and spent most nights doing only God knows what with her.

But that's fine. It's cool. Really, it is.

Dipper likes having the dorm to himself, and being able to listen to BABBA without any quips. But... When he's done with all his projects and homework ahead of schedule, and there's nothing to watch on TV and every book in his mini library read at least twice by now... Well, it got lonely.

And it's then that he really misses Mabel.

The first few weeks were almost unbearable without her near, randomly poking him and being silly. The daily calling schedule had helped... But soon they were both immersed in school work and clubs and making new friends and going out to parties.

Okay, so maybe it's mainly Mabel who's making tons of college friends and joining clubs and going to both the 'cool' parties ("We used Twizzlers as straws and I was a total beast at Mario Party. Seriously, Dip. Uno. Uno Out!"), and the 'lame' ones ("Gawd, it was horrible. Everything smelled like butt, and this one girl was so drunk she puked on my shoes").

But Dipper had Jean to hang out with, so it didn't bother him *too* much when the daily calls turned into sporadic texts and maybe a random phone call once a week.

But now he didn't have Jean, so at night he would think of Mabel. He'd wonder what she's up to, and a **need** to see her face and hear her laugh and squeeze her close would wash over him. He'd spend hours mulling over if he should call her, squashing the idea multiple times because she's probably sleeping or out with friends or doing something that made him calling her in the middle of night seem really pathetic.

But sometimes he'll get lucky, and she would call him and he can halfheartedly complain about his roommate disappearing again ("What a jerk face. He shouldn't just leave you like that. Bros before. . . well, you know").

Like last night, she had called him just after Jean proposed setting Dipper up on a date for the umpteenth time this week.

But more often than not, she didn't call. And if he isn't able to fall asleep, his mind would venture and soon missing her laugh turns into missing her warmth when she's snuggled up next to him. And when his blood flows south, he has to violently shake his head because God, that's just sick.

But sometimes he couldn't help it. And he was all alone in the dorm, and a box of tissues just happens to be on his nightstand next to a small bottle of her vanilla scented lotion that he had somehow accidentally packed. . .

Maybe he's just lonely? He couldn't possibly be into his twin sister. That's just crazy. Yeah, he's just lonely, that's all. Maybe he should accept his roommate's offer to go on a blind date. A double date. And even if Dipper didn't like the girl, at least he would have spent the night out with friends instead of alone in his room trying to block out fleeting, unwarranted thoughts about his sister.

Dipper's phone, buzzing the acceptably manly and nostalgic tune from the old Fight Fighters game, blares from across the room. He slowly blinks his eyes open, glancing at his alarm clock and. . . SHIT! It didn't go off. His alarm didn't go off and he's going to be late for his midterm exam.

He tries to jump out of bed, only to get his feet tangled in the sheet, and face planting on the carpeted floor of his dorm room.

"Okay, ow."

He sighs, rolling over and kicking off the blanket hugging his legs. So today is going to be one of those days, huh? He eases his way to his feet, picking up a pair of jeans (it didn't smell that much) and a flannel shirt (he thinks it's clean, but it was right next to the not so clean pants) off the floor and hurriedly tugs them on.

The Fight Fighters' theme starts back up again. He rushes over to his desk, picking up anything that looks important and a few that didn't because you never really knew. He then finally picks up his cell phone and smiles at the name and picture identifying the caller. Though it is kind of weird that she's calling, since they just spoke last night.

"Hello?"

“Guess who?!”

He laughs and rolls his eyes. Cradling the phone between his ear and shoulder, he picks up a few more things off his workspace and exits to the tiny living room.

“Mabel, how many times are we going to have to go through this? I know it’s you. I literally see your face when the phone rings.”

She lets out something that sounds like a mix of a laugh and a scoff. “Yeah, I know that, Broface.”

He shakes his head, falling to his knees to stuff his backpack with all the binders and books and rulers he’s carrying. “Where are you anyway?” he asks, mouth twisting in confusion. In the distances he can hear cars whiz by and honk; the light buzz of jackhammers and construction; the sound of people walking and chatting alongside her going in and out of focus. It’s the usual background noise of a city, which didn’t match up with her quaint southern university at all.

“Weeell, if you must know, Dipstick—”

The backup alarm on his wristwatch (set just in case he spent too long eating breakfast or got caught up trying to squeeze in a chapter of his latest mystery book before class) starts beeping just as he zips up his bag.

Damn it. He really is going to be late.

“Oh man, Mabel, I gotta go. I’ll call ya when I get out of class, okay? Okay. Bye, love ya.”

He barely hears her reply of “Bye bye, Brodie,” before he ends the call and jets out the door. He sprints down the hall to the elevator, pressing the down button a dozen times before the doors finally chime open. He glances down at his watch. If no one else got on, and if he can keep up a good running pace, he could make it to his first class of the day on time.

He anxiously taps his foot, glaring at the buttons as if that will make it go faster. The elevator chimes, and Dipper inwardly cries. No, no no! He needs to get to the ground floor, ASAP. But no, the elevator door’s open on the third floor and in strolls Ann, Jean’s girlfriend.

“Dipper!” she greets him with a grin. “It’s a little late for you to be taking the lift, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” he replies as pleasantly as possible, trying not to bristle at the sound of her accent. He doesn’t even know why her voice annoys him. English accents never bothered him before. He actually likes it, but something about Ann’s... As if she was throwing her international status in his face or something. That probably didn’t make much sense. “Running a bit late.”

She just nods before eyeing his dirty jeans.

“You know, some of us are going out tonight. A little surviving midterm’s party,” she tells him, her eyes never leaving the mustard stain on his pants that he only just notices. “You should tag along. You definitely need a girl in your life, and it’s the perfect opportunity for you to meet my friend Kristen.”

He sighs. And even though he had resolved to accept being set up, he couldn’t help the small frown that twists his lips.

He shakes his head, and politely declines.

Ann doesn’t care rather or not Dipper is lonely and in need of good company. No, Dipper knows this. Ann looks at Dipper and sees a problem that needs to be fixed. Fixed via a girl who’s going to try and change Dipper into a guy that didn’t spend his weekend’s pleasure reading or wearing pants with mustard stains. Dipper’s more than sure that Ann and her friend will raid his entire wardrobe... She did it to Jean, who hasn’t been able to wear a single Star Wars graphic tee since their first date.

Ugh. And really, where does she get off, just assuming he needs some girl to swoop in and “fix” him?

And who came up with this dumb social standard that you couldn’t be happy unless you’re in a relationship? Because he honestly doesn’t need a girlfriend. Never did.

Not in the second grade when Sarah Finch deemed him her man, and demanded he give her his dessert and chocolate milk every lunch period in exchange for holding her hand.

Not when he visited Gravity Falls, and okay, Wendy doesn’t count as a girlfriend even though he really wanted her to be (but he still didn’t need her). He hasn’t even thought about her in ages, actually.

Not even when he was a seventeen and Nichole Sanchez had blown into his AP Algebra II class. And yeah, when she kissed him it left him breathless. And okay, the slight difference in their skin complexion whenever he looked down at their join hands made him smile... But in the end, he didn’t need her. He could go days without so much as texting her, and it didn’t bother him in the least. And sure, he had cried a little when they broke up two days after prom... But she wasn’t a necessity. Besides, Mabel had made him some ‘sorry you just got dumped’ Oreo cupcakes, and they stayed up all night watching Good Burger and A Goofy Movie and a buttload of other silly movies from the 90’s. And that night had been more fun than any date he ever had with Nichole.

And Dipper’s pretty sure he doesn’t need one now. Or maybe ever. So when the elevator doors open, he dashes out before Ann can convince him otherwise.

Part 2

After classes, Dipper got a text from Jean saying he and Ann were going to swing by the dorm just two minutes before they waltz in. Ann gives her boyfriend a look before gazing over at Dipper, sitting alone on the couch re-reading a murder mystery novel (his own notes written in the margins). She gives Jean a light shove, before disappearing into Jean's room to pick out his clothes for the night.

"Hey Dipper, why don't you join us?" Jean asks halfheartedly, standing awkwardly in the tiny space joining the kitchenette and the common area. "It'll be fun."

Dipper glances over his friend.

When did he cut his hair? He didn't even look like the same guy that Dipper spent hours playing Nort and Fight Fighters with. In his Polo shirt and khakis, hair perfectly trimmed and in place, Jean didn't even look capable of an epic light saber battle over the last slice of pizza... Where's the guy Dipper moved in with last year? The guy with the messy black hair, and an over sized R2-D2 shirt? The guy that read Japanese comics, and had a poster of white haired girl with dragons on his wall? Where's the guy that Dipper considered to be his friend? Can someone really look and be that different over only a few weeks?

Apparently so.

"I'm good."

And he is. Dipper's totally fine.

"Dipper, we haven't really hanged in forever. Come out with us."

Dipper isn't certain how Jean made it sound like it was *Dipper's* fault that they didn't hang out as much now... But Dipper sighs, closing his book and placing it on the little coffee table.

Maybe it is his fault. Maybe Ann isn't as horrible as he's making her out to be. Maybe he's just being a baby, just upset that she took his friend away. Maybe Ann's friend will be nice. And though he still doesn't think he *needs* a girlfriend by any means, maybe he does *want* one. If not just a little.

Maybe he'll have fun tonight.

But he doesn't.

It's definitely a 'lame' party.

Dipper blinks, adjusting his eyes to the dim lighting. The music's so loud; he can feel the bass vibrating his pulse. The smell of sweat and alcohol is only over powered by the light haze floating from a circle of people passing a cigarette... Only, of course, it's not really a cigarette. And that's kind of surprising, cause isn't this a party *Ann* wanted to go to? Bewildered, Dipper glares at the back of her head as she grabs his wrist. Ann always gave off a vibe like she... Well, like she wouldn't be into parties that had *pot circles*.

He holds his breathe as he, Ann, and Jean squeeze their way through the crowd of dancers and loungers filling the room. When he inhales again, he can still smell the weed in the air. They're far enough away from the circle though, so he doesn't worry about embarrassing himself by coughing slightly on the smoke.

Somewhere along the way, Ann's grip on his wrist transitioned into her holding his hand. Ann is still holding his hand, even though they've stopped walking for almost half a minute now (He knows, he's counting). He eases his hand free, and suddenly a bottle finds its way into Dipper's hands. He isn't even sure who gave it to him. He tries to inspect the label, but it's been peeled off.

"Dipper!" Ann yells over a dub step remix of an old Sev'ral Timez song (which is *very* disconcerting to listen to). "This is Kristen!"

A short blonde is presented to him, a sloppy grin on her face.

Dipper takes a swig from the bottle. It's sweet. Lemonade? The slight burn tickling his throat when he swallows the only sign that, yes, it is alcoholic. Good. Maybe he shouldn't be completely sober for this.

A weak, nervous chuckle escapes his lips as her eyes rake him over.

"Hey," Dipper barely hears himself say. When she doesn't immediately respond, he clears his throat and tries to scream his greeting.

Kristen then laughs, loud and unbridled. It's then that Dipper realizes that she must have been there awhile before they arrived. She seems pretty drunk already. She has to be for her to be shaking with laughter because he said hello. Or maybe she spent a fair share of time in that circle near the entrance...

Dipper awkwardly shifts his weight, waiting for her laughter to calm down. He takes another sip of his drink, glancing away from Kristen to look at Ann for help but... Okay, where did Ann and Jean go?

"You're cuter than I thought you would be," Kristen yells over the music, snapping Dipper's attention back to her. She reaches up like she's about to snatch off his university hat, but then grabs his black and white checked over shirt (that Ann took upon herself to pick out for him, because apparently, agreeing to go out tonight meant he had to change clothes).

For a brief second he thinks she's going to kiss him... after knowing each other a total of three minutes (most of which had been him uncomfortably watching her laugh at him). Did he want her to kiss him?

Maybe?

She is kind of cute. And it had been a while since he was properly kissed but... No. They should at least talk a little first, right? Right.

But when she yanks him down to her eye level, their lips barely apart, *maybe* turns into *definitely*. But her breath reeks of liquor and Fritos, so *definitely* changed into *probably shouldn't*.

She just stares into his dark eyes, her own very unfocused and cloudy. Their faces are so close, barely inches, no, *centimeters* apart. Their proximity and stillness is making him anxious. What in the world is she thinking as she stares blankly into his eyes?

Part of him wants to push her away, while another wants to kiss her just to end this weird staring contest.

She then glances down at his Godzilla shirt (the only undershirt Ann could find that's undoubtedly clean) and starts laughing again.

"I knew you were a nerd," she slurs, thinking out loud more than actually talking to him. "I dunno why she thinks I'm into that."

She hiccups, and someone (a guy) calls out her name. She releases her grip on Dipper, taking a clumsy step back. She pats his chest before fumbling away to whoever just yelled out to her. "Nice to meet you."

"Nice to have met you too, I guess."

And okay? ... That could have gone better.

He spent the rest of the night trying to find Jean or Ann, since they were his ride. Neither answered his texts. So he sat in a beanbag chair, nursing a bottle of hard lemonade, hoping one of them would pass by. Eventually he gave up; walking outside and mindlessly goes to the first familiar place.

So he wakes up at a desk in the library, drool all over a Case Capers book, at six in the morning.

Dipper yawns as he strolls into his dorm. He can be mad, or upset, or disappointed, or whatever about last night later. Right now, he just wants to fall into his bed for the entire weekend.

He's almost to his room when he notices a shapely leg dangling off the sofa. He tilts his head. Who the heck is this? He takes a step toward the couch, mentally going through a list of people who would've been allowed to crash in his and Jean's living room.

The person's top half is covered by the blanket that's usually folded over the left arm rest (hiding an old meatball stain), but if the slight curves are any indication, Dipper had a strange *girl* in his living room.

His sleepy eyes lazily run over the lumps in the blanket to her exposed bellybutton, her yellow shorts which is weird for her to be wearing (the snowy season isn't here yet, sure, but still...), her creamy thighs, the curve of her calves, the mole of the ankle closest to him, her tiny feet, and her toenails, painted a glittery pink with yellow polka dots.

She jolts up, and it isn't until she kicks him that he realizes that he's been caressing her mole, up her calf, and back down to her ankle.

Her foot barely misses his nads, and suddenly he's fully awake. An apology is already spilling from his lips as she sits up and the veil falls away.

"Geez Dipper, you gave me a heart attack."

"Ma-Mabel? What the heck are you doing here?"

He doesn't mean for it to come out sounding so harsh. But he was rejected rather quickly last night, and he was ditched by people who claimed to be his friends, and his mouth has a weird taste in it, and he's tired with a sore neck cause he slept hunched over a wooden desk in a wooden chair, and he just walked all the way back to his dorm alone, and he kind of just felt up his sister's leg, and her skin is really soft and he kind of just wants to touch her again but... UGH!

Deep breath, Dipper. Calm down. No need to freak out.

"Oh you know, was just in the neighborhood. Your door was unlocked, so I just made myself at home."

His door wasn't locked? Wait no, that isn't what's important right now.

"Just in the neigh—Mabel, your school's all the way in Georgia! How did you even get here?"

She yawns, standing up to stretch and letting the blanket hit the floor. He looks away as she twits and turns her lithe body. *That's* an image that could haunt him on a lonely night.

So Dipper comes around the couch, picking up and crudely folding the sheet before placing it back on the arm rest. That stain really is an eyesore. When her bones stop popping, he dares to look at her again.

She scratches her head, and he eyes her new short hairdo cropping her skull. She had it cut around the end of summer, and even though winter's on the horizon, he still isn't quite use to it. It's not like he doesn't like it, it's just... different. When he thinks of Mabel, he always pictures rosy cheeks and *long* brown hair.

"Aren't you happy to see me?" she asks, rubbing away the remnants of a temporary tattoo (a yellow star?) from her left cheek. And he sighs and smiles at her, because, yeah, he totally is happy to see her.

"Of course I am."

They find themselves in an embrace and Dipper laughs when she mumbles "now that's more like it," into his chest.

They ease apart with soft grins.

Mabel picks up a discarded red and white letterman jacket (probably her ex-boyfriend's) that's squished between the sofa cushions, slips it on, and walks like an Egyptian (man, he forgot how energetic she is in the morning) to the little kitchen area adjacent to the living room. But wait, no. That's not a letterman jacket.

That's definitely his old Science Olympiad jacket from sophomore year, strategically designed in the hopes some girl might mistake the pack of nerdy boys for jocks and talk to them. They never did.

Dipper smirks as she turns her back to him to raid the fridge. The faded white letters of *D. Pines* are now bedazzled in hot pink, and every crack in the fake leather is covered with a cartoony cat sticker.

He watches her hips sway as she comes back to sit on the sofa, a cup of Dipper's yogurt in hand. His smirk widens into a lopsided grin when she pulls a half empty bag of gummy worms from her jacket pocket, dumping them into her yogurt cup. She props her feet up onto the coffee table, right next to his book.

He's just about to pick it up so her feet won't touch it, when the door swings open.

Jean stumbles inside.

"Oh man, Dipper. I just got your texts. I'm so sorry about last night. We thought you were with Kristen. I hope you're not mad. You're still coming with us to the park today, right? Ann's got another friend, Cindy, if that'll... Oh, hello?" Jean stops talking when he finally notices Dipper isn't alone.

Dipper glances at his sister, and realizes for the first time that even after being roommates for the second year in a row, Jean had never seen Mabel in person. In fact, he doesn't think he even mentioned Mabel to Jean by name.

“Oh, uh, well, this is Mabel. She’s my—”

“Girlfriend,” Mabel interrupts before slurping a yogurt covered worm into her mouth.

“Girlfriend?” both Dipper and Jean repeat. Because okay... what?

“Yeah, girlfriend,” she confirms with a light giggle. And just for good measure, she stretches out her leg, running her mole free foot up and down his calf. “We’re madly in love, aren’t we, Dippy?”

“Um, I guess...?”

“Oh, wow, okay,” Jean mumbles, just as stupefied as Dipper. “Well, I better go tell Ann you’re okay.” He points his thumb toward the door. “Again, sorry about last night. I’ll just leave you two alone now. See you two at the park?”

“Um, yeah,” Dipper hears himself say, though he never recalled ever being invited to Ann and Jean’s park adventure until just now.

The door shuts, and Mabel starts to cackle loudly. Okay... Seriously, what just happened?

“Mabel, what are you doing? Why did you tell him that?”

She shrugs, slurping more yogurt into her mouth. “You said they’ve been giving you a hard time about being single and junk, and always pushing girls on ya and... I dunno, Dipper, when he came in here it looked like you just got punched in the gut or something. I just wanted to help, and it *totally* worked. He backed off like *that*.” Instead of snapping her fingers, she pops her toes.

Dipper lets out a heavy sigh, rolling his eyes.

“You can’t just do stuff like this, Mabel! You have to think these things through. Man. Do you know how embarrassing it’s going to be when they find out you’re my *sister*?”

She lets out a light scoff, waving him off. “*Re*-lax, Dipper. I’m just here for the weekend. No one’s gonna find out.”

“Yes, they will. They’re going to find out. You know, why? Because they’re going to expect us to hang out with them. They’re going to expect us to act like a couple. They’re going to expect us to hold hands...”

“We already hold hands.”

“And kiss.”

“Hmm... Well, what are a few pecks and kisses between family, right? It’s not like we have to *really* kiss, like making out in front of them, right? Cause if they’re expecting that, you got some weird friends, Bro.”

She's got to be kidding? Dipper sighs again, rubbing his temples. Deep breaths. Deep breaths.

"Besides, I came because of how down you sounded last night. I might as well fix the problem for ya, while I'm here."

Well, that's sweet. . . Even if her plan is completely idiotic.

"So, okay. Yeah, okay, fine. We can do this, easy. A weekend ruse. Shouldn't be hard to pull off."

"Of course it won't, Dip. Rascallions like us never get found out."

He just nods, ignoring her eyebrows wiggling at him. This could work. Maybe. Probably. Oh God, he's going to regret this.

Pig squeals fill the room, and Dipper's eyes widen as a new problem arises.

"Wait, you didn't bring the pigs, did you?"

"*Whaaat?* Of course not," she says, digging out her phone. She frowns at it, and slips it back into her pocket. Okay, pig noises are a weird ringtone, even for Mabel. "Waddles and Virginia are still at the zoo. . . I mean school. I mean, petting farm. Ugh, the school's petting zoo of farm animals. Geez that was hard to get out."

"Uh-huh." He eyes her skeptically. "What about the piglets?"

She rolls her eyes.

"Swizzle and Sway, Jessica, and Lord Jiggle Bottom the third are there too."

He mentally tallies up the names, and is just about to question the whereabouts of the fifth baby pig when he remembers having to stay up all night consoling his sister over the phone because the runt of the litter, Mr. Wiggles, had passed on during a scorching afternoon.

So he sits down next to her, and she immediately snuggles into him. And it just feels so nice having her next to him, her head on his chest. They'll need some kind of plan to get through this silly mess without getting found out. But he isn't thinking about that as his arm wraps around her. He buries his face into the top of her head. He inhales her, his muscles relaxing as his eyes drift shut.

The only thing on his mind is a nap, and Mabel.

Part 3

When he wakes up at noon, Mabel's hair tickling his nose, his stomach flutters. And when he remembers that he's now in a plot from a bad romantic movie because of her, it churns.

Didn't the characters in this particular setup always fall for each other for real? But that's not the end game for him and Mabel. *Obviously* there won't be a grand confession of love in a public place, and they wouldn't kiss as a happy song plays in the background. He's a hundred percent certain on that.

This *is*, however, a silly ruse that'll keep his roommate and said roommate's girlfriend from... What, setting him up on dates? This is dumb. He shouldn't have to fake date his sister for them to back off.

Couldn't Jean and Ann understand that when he says he's okay, he really *is* okay with staying in for the weekend? Understand that he's fine without dating someone. He's young. There's no rush to find the future Mrs. Pines. And if they were really so concerned about him feeling lonely, couldn't the three of them just hang out? Or even better, Jean diffuse himself from Ann's hip for a few hours so he and Dipper can hang like before? If anything, *that's* the solution to the *Dipper's lonely* debacle.

But they just didn't seem to get it.

*"You definitely **need** a girl in your life."*

Ann's voice flitters through his head, and he frowns.

Ugh, Ann.

He shakes his head. Things will definitely be easier after this weekend, without Ann butting into his social life (or lack there of).

Mabel stirs, mumbling something indiscernible in her sleep before snuggling deeper into his chest.

He smiles.

“That Ann girl is British, right? Maybe I should be British too?”

“Mabel, no.”

But she’s already practicing her accent. “Chip chip, cherio, old gov’nah!”

“Mabel, I’m pretty sure no one actually talks like that.”

“Very fetch snogging we got here with me fish and chips.”

“I don’t think you know what snogging means” he sighs. “And don’t say fetch. It’s not a thing.”

“It could be,” she retorts, dropping the awful accent.

“But it’s not.”

She shrugs and winks, picking back up her accent. “Aye, old bean. Then who put the crumpets in me linens.”

What?

“Mabel, just talk normal, please. You’ve already talked to Jean earlier today, remember? It would be suspicious if you were suddenly English.”

“Oh yeah.”

“Just... just forget about Ann being from England. It’s irrelevant. Besides, the simpler we make this, the better. No needless lying. No accents. Our ages don’t change, our hobbies don’t change... You see where I’m going with this?”

She nods. “But, what about my last name? Wouldn’t it be weird if we have the same name?”

“Well, yeah, but why would last names come up? But, whatever, you can make up a new last name. No, you’ll just keep changing it. Use mom’s maiden name. And if you mess up, just play it off like you got caught up in a daydream about marriage or something.”

Her face pales at the word marriage, and he frowns.

Was marrying him such a horrible idea? Not that that would ever happen, they are siblings after all. Is it even legal to marry your sister? Probably not. Maybe in the south, though?

Doesn’t matter. Stop thinking about that, and go back to planning this dumb mess out.

“What about the story of how we met?” she asks, quickly recovering from whatever it was she needed to recover from. “Or how we got together?”

“Easy, we um. . . We met as kids. We were friends our whole lives, *best* friends even. You’re so sweet and nice and funny, and it’s always a pleasure to be around you. So when we went off to college I. . . We realized how much we really mean to each other, and started a long distance relationship.”

He clears his throat, glancing away from her and prays the burning on the tip of his ears didn’t mean he’s blushing. There’s no reason to be blushing right now. None.

“Aw, Dipper, that’s so sweet! You could write romance novels.”

“Yeah, no.”

Mabel laughs and he wonders if it’s too late to just tell Jean that Mabel’s his sister without too much damage. But later into the day, when they’re walking hand in hand towards his roommate in the park off campus, the genuine shock on Ann’s face is enough to keep Dipper from backing out of this. In fact, it makes him drop her hand to wrap his arm around her waist, pulling Mabel into his side. He plants a kiss over the fake heart tattoo on her cheek just as they reach his friend’s picnic blanket.

“Hey guys. Ann, this is my girlfriend, Mabel. Jean you’ve already met.”

Jean nods, taking a bite of his sandwich.

“Howdy do, ya’ll?” Mabel pips in the worst southern belle accent Dipper’s ever heard. Though it’s not nearly as horrendous as her English one, he still gives his twin a stern look and she back tracks to say normally, “I mean, hey.”

“Hello,” Ann greets, her shocked face melting into a small smile. At this point, Mabel had extended her hand out, palm down. The cartoonishly large red jewel of her chunky ring (wait, is she wearing a Ring-Pop?) is inches in front of Ann’s nose.

It’s kind of awkward. . . Did Mabel expect Ann to kiss her ring? Like she’s the pope or a pimp or something? Was this some kind of weird power play? Or did Mabel think that kissing rings was a *thing* in England? Is it a thing? It couldn’t be.

And it must not be, since Ann tentatively wraps her manicured fingers around the tips of Mabel’s offered hand, giving it a light shake.

Weirdest handshake ever.

Ann then pats the empty spot on the blanket, and the two sit.

“You know, when Jean told me Dipper had a girlfriend, I just didn’t want to believe it.”

“Believe it, sister. He’s *all* mine,” Mabel chimes in, waggling her eyebrows for no reason at all. She even puts her hand on his chest, snuggling into his side.

“Of course,” Ann responds, her brow lifting a bit. “Anyway, Jean, why didn’t you tell me she was so pretty?” Jean just shrugs. “You’re positively gorgeous, Mabel. Really, you are.”

“Oh, er... Thanks. You ain’t so bad, yourself. Very... *fetch*.”

Geez, Mabel. Stop trying to make *fetch* happen.

“Dipper, why didn’t you ever tell us about your pretty bird?” Ann asks. “Would’ve saved me a lot of grief, you know.”

Grief? How was he causing her... Oh whatever.

“I haven’t told you about her because... Because um...”

Why hadn’t he prepared an answer for this?

“Our parents would have a fit if they knew,” Mabel says, coming to his rescue.

“Oh?” Ann asks, handing Jean a napkin to clean the mayo off his face. “Why is that?”

“Because we’re sib-er... I mean, Ssstaaaar... Star crossed. Yeah, star crossed lovers. That’s what we are. We got this whole *Romeo Must Die* thing going on.”

“Romeo and Juliet,” Dipper corrects.

“Yeah, that. So we thought it best to keep it on the D L, from everyone. Until now. Since I’m visiting and junk, and our parents—two separate sets of people—aren’t here.”

That one brow of Ann’s lifts up again, and man. This isn’t going well. Has she figured it out? Dipper can almost see the doubt flickering in her blue eyes.

“How long have you been hiding your relationship, then?”

Finally, something he has an answer to!

“About two years now.”

“Oh,” Ann’s cheeks redden, her eyes widening. “Well that’s embarrassing. Just so you know, Mabel, I’ve been trying to set Dipper up since me and Jean got together.” She then laughs, shaking her head. “Oh I feel so silly. No wonder he was never interested, he already had you. He’s so clearly enamored. I can tell just by the way he looks at you. Last night he must have just been humoring me... Oh goodness, last night! Dipper, I’m so sorry about that. Jean got kind of pissed, I mean, drunk and we just left cause we thought you and... It doesn’t matter what I thought, I’m just really sorry. Really, I am.”

Jean nods in agreement.

“It’s fine,” Dipper tells them, his mind much too wrapped around Ann saying he’s *enamored*.

He isn’t enamored. He isn’t *in* love with Mabel, that’s just ridiculous.

But he's also not that great of an actor. . . Uh oh. Oh no. Oh god, this can't be good. He's already been staying up nights thinking about her. Oh god, no. Maybe it is possible that he is just a little, tiny bit. . .

No. He's not, he isn't. Again, that's just ridiculous.

Ann's just being nice. Just buttering them up or something.

"Oh good," Ann hums in relief. Her eyes leave his face, down to his jeans. He follows her gaze, but isn't certain if she's looking at the cheese dust Mabel had wiped off on him after eating Doritos, or if she's looking at how only half of him is sitting on the picnic blanket (and that's going to lead to grass stains). He looks back up at her in time to see her little frown before she snaps her head away to pull out her phone to check the time. "The movie should be starting soon."

Oh, is that why they were out here? That would explain why so many people are here, and the large projection screen. This is actually a pretty good spot.

"Let's get a little cozier," Ann proclaims, placing the basket of food between the two couples. "Mabel, why don't you get in Dipper's lap so there's more room on the blanket?"

To Dipper, this feels like some kind of test. Though, it probably isn't.

"Can do, Cockatoo."

Mabel crawls into his lap a second after he scoots to sit all the way on the blanket. Dipper isn't really sure what to do now that she's wiggling between his legs, but settles on wrapping his arms around her waist (if only just to end the merciless wiggling. He really didn't need any extra excitement).

"So what's the movie?" Mabel asks once she's settled in.

"Oh, just some ol' kiddie movie," Ann sighs at the same time Jean happily chirps out, "*Wreck-It Ralph*."

Mabel lets out a happy squeak, causing Jean to give her (and then Dipper) a high five. Dipper can feel Ann's watchful eye on him, so he drops another kiss on Mabel's cheek. Ann turns away just as Mabel gives him a peck of her own.

It's then that Dipper thinks back to when they were little. Mabel use to kiss him *all* the time. Everyday, on the forehead, on all his scrapes and boo-boos, on his nose, on his cheeks, on his lips. . . And in between pretending to be pirates or searching for trolls in the back yard, they would also play house.

And this isn't all that different. It really isn't *too* weird to lace their fingers up when the lights of the projector fills the screen. Nor does it feel out of place to squeeze her when he hears Mabel choke up a bit during the climax. Hell, he even gives into the urge to kiss the corner of her mouth (as if he had been aiming for her cheek, but had 'accidentally' missed)

when she starts bouncing merrily along to *Owl City* as the credits begin to roll. Even now that Ann *isn't even looking directly at them*. Yeah, this isn't weird at all. They're just playing a silly game of house. Nothing more.

So why is his gut churning? Or is it fluttering?

Everyone in the park starts to get up, gathering their blankets and trash and wandering children.

"Next month I think they're gonna play a Bond movie," Jean tells them as he stuffs their folded blanket into the empty basket. "Or some kind of action thriller."

"Won't it be too cold for this then?" Dipper questions. He's taking deep breaths, inhaling the scent of dieing trees and grass instead of Mabel in order to calm the unsettling feeling in his stomach. But she standing so close, tiny whiffs of her still gets through, and his stomach never stills. Jean just shrugs.

So now what?

That question is answered when someone suggested they get ice cream. Ann then lead the way to a frozen yogurt shop, instead of the ice cream parlor a block down. Ann's already filling up a small paper bowl with vanilla bean flavored yogurt when Dipper hands Mabel the tiny sampling cup.

The twins make a face at Ann's choice because, really? Vanilla's fine for ice cream, but *yogurt*?

But maybe Dipper shouldn't judge, since the first flavor he tests is chocolate.

"Dip, they got *red velvet cake* fro-yo! This place is a mad house!" Mabel laughs, pulling the tiny lever to swirl the dark red treat into the cup. Dipper scoops some off the top of his sister's cup, and they slurp it at the same time and...

"*Bleagh!* That was horrible!"

"*Way* too rich."

They laugh at each other's displeased faces before moving on to the next flavor. This goes on for while, testing each flavor with varied reactions, daring each other to eat the more disgusting flavors again.

Eventually Mabel settles on the birthday cake flavor, gummy bears and sprinkles covering her yogurt; Dipper gets strawberry. He laughs off her teasing as he tops it with sliced strawberries. "What else am I suppose to put on it? Gummy worms?"

She giggles, giving him a light shove as she takes a seat on the opposite side of Ann and Jean.

Huh, how did Dipper forget they were there?

“You know,” Ann says when they’re half way through their treats. “You two look a lot alike.”

“I was just thinking that,” Jean smiles at her, but Ann’s eyes are focused on the Pine twins. Dipper’s heart skips a beat, and he squeezes Mabel’s hand underneath the table.

“I just read something that said people that look alike are attracted to each other,” Ann continues with a knowing smile. “I thought it was kind of weird, but seeing you two together now... I guess there must have been some *truth* to that study.”

Dipper laughs and he hates how jittery it sounds. He tries to just shrug and continue eating, but a coated strawberry falls off his spoon and into his lap. Jean chuckles as Ann tries to hand Dipper a napkin. But Mabel’s already picking the fruit off him, tosses it in her empty bowl, and smears the yogurt into the denim. They look at the light stain at the crotch of his pants, and Mabel bites her lips because it... Well, it kind of looks like he’d just... *um, yeah* in his pants... And her hand on his thigh isn’t helping matters.

“Well someone’s having a good time,” Mabel chuckles under her breath and yeah, this is weird. He nudges her hand away, his face burning. Unlike mustard and smears of cheese dust, the yogurt stain will dry and fade into the jeans. In a few moments it won’t look like *he’s having a good time*. At least, not via his pants.

“Oh, shut up.”

She sticks out her tongue, and he rolls his eyes at her even as he laughs. She punches his arm, and soon they’re both swatting at each other and giggling like children.

“It’s getting late,” Ann declares, her voice strangely tense. “We should head out.”

It wasn’t *that* late, especially since it’s a Saturday. But okay. Dipper isn’t going to complain. They’re almost out the door when Mabel’s phone buzzes, the sound of pigs squealing filling the air. She quickly silences it with a sigh.

“Hey uh, Dip? I’m just gonna go... use the facilities real quick, kay?”

“Um, yeah, okay. We’ll be right outside.”

She nods, quickly skipping towards the restrooms. He steps outside, immediately zipping up his light jacket. It’s gotten colder outside. Mabel’s still wearing shorts; all she packed was shorts and a skirt because apparently it’s still blazing hot in the south this time a year. Hopefully she’ll be alright until they get back to the dorm. He still had some yarn from a project he had last semester. Maybe she could use it to knit up some stockings or something? Did he have enough yarn to cover all of her legs? Probably not. Maybe he should just buy her some stockings... or just some pants. He didn’t want her to be cold.

Maybe Ann would lend her a pair for tomorrow? They seem like they were about the same size.

He turns to ask, but is quickly deterred by Ann’s steely eyes and humored grin.

"You know, Dipper," Ann huffs, and he can't tell if she's teasing or genuinely upset, "you're being very mean."

"I am?"

"Yes! You spent the whole day trying to trick us. Who is she, really? Your cousin?"

"What?" he sputters out a tad too fast. "No, she's not my cousin."

"Oh please, Dipper. How stupid do you think I am? I get that you're mad at me about last night, so you decided to toy with me by parading around with your relative. You had me going for a second there, but the jokes over, okay? You had your laugh. Now why don't we..."

"She's *not* my cousin," Dipper says with conviction. Ann isn't too far off, and he's proud of his ability to not completely crumble and let the façade die right away. "Why would you think that?"

"Ann," Jean mutters warily, his voice tinged with confusion. He's been standing awkwardly to the side, gloved hands cradling the empty picnic basket as he looks back and forth between his girlfriend and Dipper. But she doesn't answer him, her eyes glued on Dipper as she scoffs.

"Plenty of reasons. There are so many reasons for me to not believe that that girl in there is not really your girlfriend." And for a split second, Dipper felt insulted. But then she added, "The most obvious being that she isn't even your type."

Dipper's brows furrow. She didn't think Dipper couldn't get a girl like Mabel... She thought *Mabel* couldn't get a guy like Dipper. And really, that's preposterous. Mabel could get any guy she wanted, including him... He didn't just think that.

"Isn't my... What would you know about my type?"

"Your cousin's cute and all, and even if she isn't your cousin she's... She's so childish and silly. You couldn't possibly be into her. Her shirt has llamas on it, she has stickers on her jacket, and she cried during a cartoon!"

"They're *alpacas*, it's *cute*, and it was an *emotional moment*!"

He's getting defensive, and he's yelling at her without meaning to. Her teasing smile is now gone, anger sparking in her eyes.

"She spit yogurt out in her hand! It was disgusting!"

"So what? It didn't taste good!"

"You know, Dipper, you need more than a cute face."

"Mabel *is* more than a cute face. She's the most incredible person on the planet!"

"Oh Dipper, just stop it already. You need someone smart and classy. Someone like..."

“Who? *You?*”

She jumps back a bit at that, her eyes wide. But she doesn’t back down. “Yes, *me*. I’m a much better choice for you than that... that...” She didn’t seem capable of coming up with an adjective or noun or whatever, and falls silent.

“Ann, what the hell?” Jean asks, his face contorted in both anger and confusion... Much like Dipper’s.

Did Ann just... Did Ann just admit to having a crush on Dipper?

The bell above the yogurt shop’s door rings. Mabel strolls outside. As she buttons up her jacket, Mabel quickly notes the hostility in the air.

“Whoa, awkward silence...”

Before she could scream, or sing, or dance, or make a face (or more likely, a combination of all four) to break the ice, Dipper takes her hand and pulls her to him.

And maybe he’s still boiling over Ann talking down on Mabel for just being who she is, and maybe he just wants to prove Ann wrong, because his lips crash onto Mabel’s.



It’s hard and possessive. His arms wrap around her, one hand landing inside her jacket on her back while the other grips the hair at the nape of her neck. He pours his entire being into the kiss, lips searing in the cold night. Her arms are crushed between them, her fingers clutching the chest of his windbreaker. He licks her bottom lip before sucking it into her mouth. Mabel’s knees buckle, his grip on her the only reason she’s staying upright. She tastes like sugar. His heart is pounding in his ears. She lets out the tiniest of whimpers, but it’s enough to jolt him out of the kiss.

He pulls back with a smack, his breathing harsh. She blinks her eyes open as Dipper squeezes her hands.

“Dip,” she gasps his name like it was both a curse and a prayer. He could almost hear the *damn* spilling from her lips. Dazed, her eyes are still blinking like she hasn’t come completely back online yet.

He turns curtly to Ann, his eyes cold. See Ann, Mabel’s desirable. Dipper can totally be into her and her alpaca shirt. And cousins’ didn’t do *that*.



Ann’s mouth is agape; her eyes a tad misty... And even though the kiss had basically been a big *fuck you, Ann*, Dipper didn’t think she’d be so unsettled by it.

And... oh man, did he really just make out with Mabel to prove a point?

He should go. They should leave. Like, *right now*.

And without another word, he runs off with Mabel in hand.

Part 4

Whatever effect the kiss had had on Mabel wore off quickly. She's laughing as they run through the streetlamp lit roads towards the campus dorms. It bleeds into the night, brilliantly outshining the stars and the moon. He isn't sure if it's the endorphins from the running, or if it was the kiss or her laughing, but Dipper feels high. All the anger and anxiety melts away. He finds himself laughing along with her. Their laughter doesn't stop until they fall onto his sofa, exhausted.

"That was really cray-cray, Bro," she manages to say after their breathing became normal again. "What was all *that* about, anyway." She does jazz hands, gesturing towards the heavens in reference to *that*.

And he didn't know what else he could possibly say other than, "Just um... Had to bring the point home for them."

It doesn't explain why they had to run off, but she accepts his answer with a nod.

"You got some weird friends, Bro-ster," she mumbles, more to herself than him. They fall silent. Dipper starts to squirm next to her, quickly coming down from his high.

They should actually talk about it, right?

Wait, no. They don't need to. It was part of the ruse, part of the game. Nothing's different between them. He should just drop it. She seems perfectly fine with dropping it. She isn't pressing the issue. So just pretend it didn't happen, because it's kind of like it didn't. It didn't mean anything. He couldn't let it mean anything.

So he keeps up the charade.

"Today went... well."

"Well? Dippingsauce, it went *epically*. I should be an actress. We should totally drop out of school, and fly to Hollywood."

“Yeah, okay.” But he’s shaking his head. Ann saw through it, and maybe Jean did too. They were horrible actors. But Mabel doesn’t need to know that, or anything Ann had said outside the frozen yogurt shop. “How about we drink hot chocolate and go to bed instead?”

“That is an equally acceptable plan.”

He smiles, surprised by how easily things are going despite that only minutes ago he had been nibbling on her bottom lip. And okay, he shouldn’t be thinking about her lips or how soft and sweet they are...

He hops up off the sofa to the tiny kitchen.

“I’m gonna go take a Russian shower. I feel kind of...”

He isn’t certain what she’s going to say, or why he feels like whatever word she’s about to use is directly linked to the kiss. He *does* know that he doesn’t want to hear how disgusting it was, because it didn’t feel all that disgusting to him (even though he knows it should’ve been gross and much, much harder to press his lips onto hers).

So he quickly nods and asks, “Russian shower?”

“You *rush in*, ya rush out.”

He forces a laugh, suddenly feeling awkward as he pulls out the one small pot he owns and fills it with water.

As he sets the water to a boil, he listens for the shower to come on. He listens as she starts caterwauling the chorus of *Walking on Sunshine*. He feels his muscles relax for the first time since waking up this afternoon. Everything’s fine. It worked out fine.

He mixes the hot water and chocolate powder into cups, dropping extra marshmallows into Mabel’s. Back at the couch, he’s placing the hot chocolate onto the coffee table when she reenters the room. Damp hair curling, fresh faced, eyes lidded, wearing nothing but his plaid shirt as she glides over to him.

His pulse is racing. He can feel the vein in his neck along with a lower part of his anatomy twitch at the sight of her. His mouth goes dry, and he finds himself licking his lips when she sits down next to him. Her fresh scent floods his nose. He glances down at her bare legs and blinks.

She’s wearing teal shorts. Of course she’s wearing shorts. Why the hell would she come strolling out in just his shirt? The plaid’s long enough on her to give that illusion with such short shorts on, but still... He should have known better. There’s no reason for her to be close to naked and god, why does he feel so disappointed?!

“This is clean, right? I didn’t pack any PJ’s...”

“Y-yeah, I think it is,” he nods. He drinks his hot chocolate, feeling silly and berating himself. She picks up her cup, silently sipping as she eyes the room. The awkward feeling settles over them again. Okay, this is really stupid. They should just talk about it. “I’m sorry for, you know, just kissing you . . . like *that*. All out of the blue and whatnot.” He takes a deep breath, trying to keep his eyes from dropping hers. “And if it was awkward, or weird, or bad or . . .”

“It wasn’t bad,” she mumbles, interrupting the would-be long list of negatives. Her cheeks flush, and *she’s* the one to drop eye contact. “It was . . . *something*. Definitely not bad. Your uhh . . . You’re a really good kisser, Broface.”

“Oh uhh,” he feels his own face redden. A smile breaks across his face. “Thanks.”

She glances at him, eyes darting away quickly. She tries wiggling herself inside the plaid shirt, only able to get half of her head beneath the collar.

It dawns on him that, despite everything, Mabel had *enjoyed* the kiss. And as he lets it replay in his head, he realizes that at some point during that quick, fiery kiss, she had puckered her lips. *She had kissed him back!*

He doesn’t really want to think about what that could mean, but his smile widens and a strange sense of hope fills him. He lets out a soft laugh, and she chuckles as well.

“So we’re good?”

She nods, easing out of her makeshift turtle shell.

“Duh, Dipper! Of course we’re good. What’s a bit of smooching between family, amiright?” That sentence ends a tad bit nervous sounding, but he nods in agreement with her anyway. They bump each others fists and smile, that awkward cloud dissipating from the air. “Beside, I’m supposed to be your lady, right?” she asks with a wink.

“For just one more day,” he reminds her. “And if you’re going to be ‘my lady’, you should stop with all the winking and brow waggling. It’s very unnecessary.”

“*Pfft*. Dipper, *puh*-lease. I’m totally selling this thing.”

“Mhmm.”

She shoves him with a laugh. “I am, though!”

“*Sure, you are.*”

“Hey Dipster, don’t get all sarcastic. Cause I totally carried you through that picnic.”

“You? Carried me?” He shakes his head. “Mabel, I’m the only reason we made it all the way through desert. If anything, it’s your fault Ann got suspicious.”

“Annie got suspicious?”

Damn it, he wasn’t going to tell her about that.

“Um yeah. . . She sort of accused me of lying about *this*.” He wags a finger between them.

“When the flip did this happen?”

“When you were using the restroom.”

“Oh. . . *Oh!* Is that why you kissed me?”

“Um. . . sort of, yeah.”

She laughs loudly, shaking her head.

“Wowzers, Dip,” she giggles softly now, somehow sounding both relieved and. . . disappointed? “Why didn’t ya just let it drop if she called us out on it?”

He shrugs.

There were a lot of reasons why he didn’t drop the charade, some of those reasons he’s not sure he’s willing to think too much about. And since he doesn’t really want to tell her how Ann belittled her the moment she was out of earshot, he settles on the one truth he can tell her.

“I just didn’t want to stop playing this game with you, I guess.”

They finish their off their drinks, and Dipper quickly rinses off the cups. Mabel yawns.

“Why don’t you sleep in my room,” Dipper offers as he puts the two cups away. “I’ll take the sofa.”

“Don’t be silly, Dip. I can sleep on the couch again.”

And really, after today and having slept on hard wood the night before, nothing sounded better than falling into his bed. But still. . .

“You slept on the couch last night. We can just trade off. You get the bed tonight, and I’ll get it tomorrow and everyday after you leave Monday morning. Sounds fair, right?”

She smiles. But then her lips purse, her eyes squinting at him. “But you didn’t sleep in your bed last night. . . What happened last night anyway? Everyone keeps apologizing and junk for it.”

He sighs. Walks back into the living room, and tells her everything that happened. She laughs at him coughing on the smoke (even though she admits to doing the same at her first ‘lame’ party). She pats his arm reassuringly when he tells her about Ann’s friend whose name he’s already forgotten. And when he finishes with “Then I walked home, and you were here,” her mouth drops open and she blinks at him.

“Dipper!” she gasps out, astonished. “The *heck*, man! You’re telling me we’ve been making goo goo eyes all day to impress those party ditching *jerks*! I should’ve been punching their ugly mugs!”

He shrugs.

He hasn't really had time to think and fester over what had happened, and now he honestly didn't even care. He smiles at her huffing and puffing over it though.

"It's fine, Mabel, really."

She grumbles, crossing her arms and falling back onto the couch with an angry pout. She takes a deep breath, gazing up at the ceiling with her feet now in his lap. He idly starts playing with her toes until she's giggling and smiling again. She sits back up.

"Okay, I'm your girlfriend, right? And we're in college. It'll be weird if we didn't share your bed, so..."

She bounces off the couch, running into his room. He chases after her, almost tripping over a pair of jeans. Okay, he should really put all his dirty clothes in one cohesive pile.

He isn't even certain why they just ran in here. His playful laughter softens to a nervous chuckle when his eyes fall on the twin sized bed. If they were really going to share a bed, they were going to have to lie extremely close to each other.

She stands near the head of the bed, and gasps.

"No way! My *cookie jamboree* cream!" she exclaims, picking up her vanilla scented lotion off his bedside table. She frowns a smidgen, eyeing how little is left in the bottle, then laughs. "Dude, have you been using my lotion?"

He blushes and she guffaws.

"Oh dude, you totally been using it! *Ha!* ... But you don't smell like cookies." She looks back down at the table, eyes falling instantly to the box of tissues. She bites her lip, but is unable to stop the wicked grin from taking over her face. "Ew, Dipper," Mabel teases, nose wrinkling as she picks up his *Statistics with Trigonometry* book off the table. "You could've at least hid your porn."

He couldn't help laughing. She had no idea how close to the truth she is about that damn lotion. But he rolls his eyes at her, and plays along.

"Well, if you're going to be my lady, you should know that I'm a numbers man."

She snorts out a laugh, opening and holding the book vertically as if looking at a centerfold. He comes up behind her, arms instinctively wrapping themselves around her middle. He nods at the page.

"*Mmm*, now that's a sexy integer."

"Doesn't look squat like me," she pretends to pout. "I don't know how to feel."

“Don’t be jealous.” He chuckles, leaning more into her. “You’re the only one I need,” he whispers into her ear, dropping his head down to kiss her neck.



He blinks when she gasps, and they both tense up.

What the hell are they doing? What just happened?

Somewhere during this little game, something had shifted. It didn’t feel like they were just playing a game anymore. It never really felt like a game at all. It felt real, and if Dipper’s honest with himself, he *wanted* it to be real.

“Mabel?” he chokes out, throat dry.

“Yeah, Dip?” she breaths out so low that if he wasn’t cradled into her (if they weren’t in this marginal space where their bodies are molding together) he wouldn’t have heard her. He opens his mouth and he isn’t sure what he wants to say, or what he wants *her* to say, but neither gets a chance to say anything.

A door slams, and the two jerk a part. Dipper instantly misses her warmth, and maybe she’s missing his too because her arms wrap around the spot his just abandoned.

Dipper exits his room, and even though Jean’s technically the reason why Dipper and Mabel are sharing a room tonight, Dipper honestly didn’t expect to see his roommate.

A sullen Jean looks up at Dipper with puffy eyes and frowns.

“What are *you* doing here?”

Dipper steps back at his roommate’s angry tone. “I live here?” Dipper states a bit uncertainly. He then shakes off his shock, and glares back at his so-called friend. “Why are *you* here, Jean?”

Silence and then,

“Me and Ann broke up,” Jean mutters, dropping his glare. Dipper’s eyes soften.

“Oh.”

Jean shakes his head, ruffling his hair so it stuck up wildly like it use too (only it’s not as long, and not nearly as ridiculous looking as it was before Ann).

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to snap at you. I know this isn’t your fault or anything...” He’s shaking his head again, a fist balling up in his mane as he blinks back tears. “I should’ve known she was into you. Why else would she keep trying to bring you along on dates, or give a shit about your pants?”

He squeezes his eyes shut.

Dipper reaches out for him, only to think better of it and lets his hand fall. Instead he stupidly asks, “Are you okay?”

He shakes his head again. “I just... I just need to be alone.”

Dipper nods, watching him storm into his room. A moment later *Dashboard Confessional* songs are blasting out of Jean’s room.

When he goes back inside his own room, Mabel is sitting on the edge of the bed. Dipper isn’t sure if she heard or not. She’s nervously playing with the strands of hair on the side of her head when their eyes meet.

Before he can say anything, she asks a tad too loudly, “Do you like my hair cut?”

Dipper opens his mouth to speak, but she keeps talking.

“I don’t think I ever asked you if you liked it before. I like it. I think it’s *fetch*. But it’s *sooo short*. I can’t even braid it or put it in a ponytail really. And *bleah!* I dunno Dip, it’s like I like it this way but I kind of miss my long hair, ya know?”

“It’ll grow back,” he hears himself say. He pulls out a pajama set out of his dresser (guaranteed to be clean since he never bothers to wear pajamas to bed).

“But do you like the way I look? I like the way I look, but sometimes I don’t think I look like myself anymore.”

He looks at her, sitting on his bed and wearing his slightly too big shirt. She certainly didn’t look like his *sister* right now. She looks more like his... his *lover*.

“You look exactly how you’re supposed to look, Mabel. And I like it... A lot.”

She blushes, looking away from him and twisting her fingers more into her hair. He leaves the room to take a shower. The warm water beats down on him as he thinks over all the things that happened today. He isn’t certain how he feels about Ann or Jean now. Though he never really liked Ann and he once considered Jean to be his best college buddy, there’s now this *indifference* when Dipper reflects on every moment the three of them have shared leading up to his fight with Ann over Mabel.

And Mabel. . .

Before he could blame it on loneliness, and convince himself that the only reason she's the star of his late night fantasies is because really, who else is there? But Mabel isn't just convenient for him. She's not just a pretty face he can easily picture when his hand slides under the covers.

She's fun, and makes him laugh. She makes him happy. Can get him excited, but also relax him. They care about each other! They can talk and joke about anything. She's creative, and silly. Sweet and nice, and the gnawing pain he felt when they weren't together wasn't simply a brother missing his sister, nor a guy missing his closest friend. It was the feeling lovers felt when they were apart, pining for each other in that melodramatic way that you think only happens in silly romance novels and you laugh at the heroes because you have no idea that this pain is real and all consuming, and it really does feel like you're going to die if you can't have each other and. . . Damn it all, he wants her. *Needs* her!

There! He said it! Or rather *thinks* it. But it's out now, floating in the universe.

And she's sitting on his bed right now as he scrubs the dirt off his chest.

He turns off the shower. Quickly drying himself off, he slips on his night clothes. He hurries out the bathroom because she's *here!* She's here and he can hold her, and just say *to hell with it* by telling her how he feels.

He's *in* love with her. And it isn't ridiculous, or stupid, or wrong, or disgusting. And she had come all this way just for him. And she had set up this ruse. And she had kissed him back! And she had liked it! And he's willing to believe that if he kissed her again, she'll like it just as much because she has to be just as madly in love with him as he is with her! She just had to be!

He stops short.

Mabel's already lying across the bed, fast asleep. Dipper lets out a heavy breath, that sudden burst of energy leaving him. He's now drained and tired. He didn't exactly have a plan when he ran in here. If she had been awake, he might have just scooped her up into a second kiss.

That could have ended badly.

He shakes his head, little drops of water flying from his damp hair. He looks at her again, eyes lingering on her bare legs. His stomach twists with guilt. He turns off the lights.

He can't just push himself on her. And just because he has these feelings doesn't mean she does too (he learnt that a long time ago).

He shouldn't sleep next to her.

He kicks together a small pile of clothes, using it as a pillow as he lies down on the floor.

These clothes stink. The carpet isn't very soft either. It's colder down here; that combined with his wet head makes him sneeze (and he knows she's really asleep, because there's no way she can resist playfully teasing him about his kitten like snuffles).

He eases up to his feet. He stands over her, watching her sleep for a minute or two before losing the fight with himself. He crawls into bed next to her. He doesn't wrap his arms around her, or even tries to bury himself into her side. It just felt *wrong* to do so, now that he's finally acknowledging these un-platonic feelings he has for her.

So he lays flat on his back, keeping a gap between them the best he can manage in such a small bed.

He yawns, thinking. There really is no need to keep up the charade. Jean's probably going to be sulking in his room all day tomorrow, and Ann. . . Who knows what she's going to be up to. Though they won't tell anyone that they *weren't* dating (or that they're related), they no longer had to 'make goo goo eyes all day'.

So tomorrow, without any kind of pretenses influencing their actions, he'll test the waters. If he can gather enough evidence that there's at least a sixty percent chance of her liking him, *then* he'll spill his guts and kiss her. Maybe. Probably. Better make that *one hundred* percent certain, because this is the kind of thing that can ruin their relationship (possibly). So it's settled. He nods to himself, staring firmly at the ceiling.

Tomorrow, the ruse dies.

Part 5

His eyes slowly crack open.

Sometime during the night he had turned on his side and now their legs are intertwined. Though their legs are braided together, their upper bodies still have the tiny gap between them. But their faces are only inches from each other.

Dipper's tired eyes stare at Mabel's sleeping face. Her relaxed brow, her long lashes, her button nose, her lips... Her perfectly pink lips, opened ever so slightly so that he can hear and feel every tiny breath she makes, almost look like they're puckered. The thought of sneaking a quick peck crosses his sleep fogged brain.

Instead, Dipper carefully disentangles himself from her. He turns on his other side, facing the wall and away from his twin. He falls back to sleep.

Some time later, he wakes again at the sound of her giggling. He whispers her name, voice groggy and hoarse from sleep. She doesn't answer him. He rolls over, only to get a face full of hair. She had turned away from him. He squeezes his eyes shut and takes a calming breath, trying to rid himself of the fleeting sadness he felt that she had turned her back to him while she slept (because that's a dumb thing to be upset about it. And didn't he *consciously* turn away from her earlier? It had been out of respect, but still...).

More awake than he had been earlier, Dipper sits up and looks down at his sister curiously. She's still asleep, a small grin tugging her lips. She had laughed in her sleep?

Doesn't that mean she's dreaming?

For a few seconds he wonders what she's dreaming about, and if it's him that's making her smile and giggle. He yawns. Scratching the hairs on the underside of his chin, he peers over Mabel's sleeping body to glance at his clock. The glowing red numbers read seven forty-five a.m.

It's early, but close to the time he usually got up on a school day. Dipper would crawl out of bed, scouring his room for clean clothes and desperately try to remember the last time he crossed the quad with his hamper to the dorm's laundry mat. He'd check his homework

or test his projects. He'd brush his teeth after draining his bladder. He'd tug on either his white university cap or one of the many he's collected over the years (most of which still, strangely, fits his head). He'd eat whatever was at his disposal that didn't require any cooking and maybe partake in some pleasure reading if there wasn't a test to study for, before heading out for the day.

But it isn't a school day. It's Sunday.

But even so, Dipper would normally get out of bed. He would stroll straight to the bathroom in his boxers. Afterwards, Dipper would spread some Nutella on a slice of bread, nibbling away at it as he watches television or play video games for a few hours. By then he usually would've mustered up enough energy to do something more productive, like restock the fridge or go buy supplies so he can get ahead start on his latest class project. And throughout the day he'll wait for Mabel to call or text him.

But today, Mabel's in bed with him.

He glances back down at her, realizing how close she is to the edge. He grabs hold of her sides, gently pulling her more onto the bed. Mabel stirs, emitting a soft moan of displeasure. He stills, hands still holding her middle. Her eyes are still closed when she takes hold of his arm, snuggling his forearm to her chest as she forces the arm to drape her frame. After a few moments of stillness, Dipper sighs and relaxes fully onto the bed again. He falls back to sleep with a light smile on his face, thinking *10 percent*.

He had snuggled into her while they slept. Their legs had entangled themselves again. Dipper's arms secured her spot in the middle of the tiny bed, keeping her back pressed against his chest. He feels Mabel begin to wiggle and squirm against him. He squeezes her, making her motions cease.

"Mabel, *stop*," he grumbles into her neck, only half awake with his eyes still closed. "I'm trying to sleep."

"Yeah, okay," she huffs, her voice sounding much more awake than his. "But I kind of need to pee, so can you please release me, warden?"

He lets out a disgruntled whine, and tries to find the energy to release his grip on her without actually waking up. But he must be taking too long, because a second later she's wiggling again. Her bottom presses firmly against his pelvis, and he isn't able to keep in his moan (not that he's awake enough to even try to hold it back). His hips buck on reflex, and Mabel stops moving.

If they weren't fully awake before, they certainly are now.

Dipper's eyes pop open, his body jolting away from her and into the wall. He knocks against it, hitting the back of his head with a light thud. Mabel gasps. A dull pain rocks through his head. Dipper silently groans, toppling over on his stomach to bury his flushed face into a pillow while he gingerly rubs his crown.

“Are you okay, Dip?” she asks, trying her best to sound concerned but the laughter in her voice betrays her. The pain from hitting his head is already subsiding. He shakes his head anyway. He’s humiliated.

She must have known that his answer wasn’t in reference to his head, because she pats his back with a soft chuckle and tells him she’ll be right back. He keeps his face hidden away even after she leaves the room. The throbbing in his head and the rush of blood in his cheeks (as well as down below) are gone when he hears her come back from the bathroom.

He dares a peek at her. She’s standing in the middle of his room, staring at him with an uneasy grin plastered on her face. The flower headband she wore yesterday is back in her freshly brushed hair. A tattoo of a pink balloon now graces her cheek. Her sparkling earrings are back, and he’s only now realizing she had taken them out after her shower last night. The teal shorts and plaid shirt she had been wearing are now replaced by a white top that depicted a blue cat wearing sunglasses (the words *Cool Cat* written below the graphic in cursive) and a bright pink skirt that cuts off an inch above her knees. The skirt has black suspenders attached to it (colorful buttons and glued on bows decorating the straps) that she’s letting hang free at her sides. They swing and bump her calf as she walks closer to the bed. If her feet weren’t bare, she’d be completely ready to go out and greet the world.

How long has he been laying here?

He lifts his face completely off the pillow, but doesn’t make eye contact when she reaches the bed. “I um uh... Sorry,” he hears himself mumble. She shrugs, taking a seat next to him.

“It’s fine, Dip,” she chuckles. “I know all about dudes being... *happy* in the morning. It’s cool.”

He looks at her again, and she’s still smiling.

“You think this is funny, don’t you?”

“Uh, *yeah*. You had your ‘willie nelson’ on my butt. Like, *whaat?* That’s weird. And crazy. Beyond cray-cray, amiright?” she laughs again, looking away sheepishly. “I mean, yeah. Isn’t it funny that guys’ bodies just naturally do that while they sleep? Even if their sister’s in the bed with them? Like, *woah dude*. Ha, yeah... It’s hilariously weird. Right?”

Her smile and laughter seems a tad off. She sounds like she’s trying to rationalize it, or at least make the whole incident seem less sexual. Her voice got louder as she spoke, louder than was necessary since he’s lying right next to her, just like it had last night when she was talking about her hair and...

She’s nervous.

It hits him right in his chest. He springs up so he’s sitting on the bed. *She’s nervous*. Shouldn’t the normal reaction to him having a hard-on be her calling him gross or something, and never talking about it again? There shouldn’t be a reason for her to think that his morning wood (a totally natural thing that just sort of happens) had anything to do with

her. But she had to be thinking that it *did*, because why else would she be nervous? And why else would she have been nervous last night, trying to steer the conversation away from how he had just kissed her neck, if she wasn't worried that it had meant something?

Either he's been extremely transparent with the feelings he had been fighting over the past year and an a half, or maybe... Maybe it is just a tiniest bit possible that she's fighting feelings of her own.

If she's trying to convince herself that he doesn't feel *that way* about her, he isn't going to indulge it on the off chance that she's doing it in an effort to cool down her desire for him (*Her desire for him*. Man, that sounds so...)

But it *is* possible she has sensed his less than appropriate thoughts about her. So he isn't going to outright tell her that *yes, he actually **can** have and **has** had erections because of **her*** because, if she isn't battling those emotions, admitting such a thing in any way can be completely catastrophic.

So he settles on hopping out of bed.

"You hungry?" he asks, glancing at the clock that told him that it's eleven twenty-five. She nods. "Then let's go get something."

"Well it better be someplace where we can get a butt load of food, Bro, cause all I ate yesterday were chips and yogurt and now I'm *starving!*"

She pats her belly; sticking out her gut and making it look bloated. He smiles, more so at how much more at ease she is now than she was a few seconds ago than anything else.

He peels off his pajama top, tossing it to the other side of the room. He picks up a hunter green shirt off the floor and sniffs it.

"Ew, Dip! *Ya nasty!* When the heckaroo was last time you actually washed any of your clothes?"

He shrugs with smirk, tugging the presumably clean shirt on. He spots the plaid flannel shirt she had worn to bed folded on the chair of his work desk. He slips it on, and his smile widens. It smells like her.

"When we get back from eating, we are totally doing some laundry. Cause, no offense, Dipper, but it kind of stinks in here, like a... like a... Uhh..."

He kicks off his pajama bottoms and tugs on a pair of grey pants. He turns and looks at her. She's blinking, mouth agape as a soft blush rises to her cheeks. She then bites her lip, snorting as she holds back a laugh.

So okay... *40 percent* sure.

When they head out, Mabel glances at Jean's closed door, the sound of a muted *Coldplay* song playing behind it.

“Sooo, are we not gonna be all couple-y today?”

He doesn’t really answer her; just makes a noncommittal humming noise with a light shrug. After locking the dorm’s door behind them, he grabs her hand and they walk to the elevator.

“Ooh! You should totally take me on a campus tour,” Mabel pips, as they enter the elevator. Dipper presses the button for the ground floor, shaking his head. “Aw, why not?”

“Because, you went on the school’s official tour *with me*. It’s not that big of a campus. You already know where everything is.”

“Yeah but you can show me where all the *nerdy* hotspots are!”

“You mean the library?”

“Psh, I’m serious. I wanna see where my bro-bro spends his free time.”

“Oh uh...”

How sad is it that he actually does spend his free time at the library?

Before he can embarrass himself with a proper answer, Mabel’s phone rings. The pig noises echo loudly in the tiny space. She uses her free hand to dig out her phone from her jacket, quickly ending the call. Not quickly enough, however, for Dipper to not glance down at the caller ID to see the picture of a smiling green eyed man and the top of Waddles’ head (with what looks like a wooden fence behind them) and the words *Just-In LOVE* where the name of the caller should be.

His stomach drops, and he has to take a deep calming breath to keep his mind from racing (and his heart from breaking).

He knows Mabel’s been dating. She’s too much of a romantic not to. Falling for and deeming *way* too many guys as ‘the one’ (though the title of ‘soul mate’ still goes to Waddles) was just kind of something Mabel did. She’s been a tad boy crazy since they were ten years old. It was never anything serious though, and she never actually used the L word when referring to those guys... So for her to actually have this guy’s name in her phone saved with love in all caps...

20 percent.

What was Dipper’s name saved as in her phone, again? *Bro-Sauce*? Or did she change it since the last time he had used her phone to call his (having lost it somewhere in the living room at home)?

Yeah, definitely down to twenty.

She pockets her phone just as the doors chime open and they walk outside.

But she had ignored the call. And she may not tell him everything, but she hasn't mentioned having a boyfriend for a while now. He recalls having to force himself not to sound excited when she told him she's breaking up with her boyfriend of three months some odd weeks ago. This *Just-In LOVE* character is probably just an old flame she's forgotten to delete from her cell or something.

And as they walk away from the dorms, her fingers worm their way out of his hold enough to ease their way between his. Their fingers now laced up, her thumb rubbing the one knuckle it can reach, they continue to stroll off campus towards the strip of small restaurants (both fast food and tiny bistros) and shops.

30 percent sure. Maybe even thirty five.

They stroll pass the park. Mabel gushes over a pair of Yorkies that merrily bops past the twins, leading their owner in the opposite direction of Dipper and Mabel on pink leashes. His sister muses aloud how she wants a cute puppy. Dipper laughs, reminding her of the chocolate lab they owned for only a few weeks because it destroyed the house (and *hated* wearing her specially made sweaters). She laughs and scoffs, declaring that that was a long time ago (but yeah, maybe she'll wait before getting a puppy). When they walk by the frozen yogurt shop, Dipper feels his cheeks warm. When he glances at Mabel, she seems to be blushing as well. But she's wearing a small grin.

50 percent!

"Okay, so, MacDonald's or Taco Bell?" Dipper asks, coming to a stop on the strip.

"Hmm. Are we dollar-naïres?"

"I'm pretty sure everyone's a... So MacDonald's, then?"

"I dunno, Dip. Not really feelin' Micky D's right now."

"So Taco Bell?"

"How much we got?"

"Enough for fast food," he laughs, "But I can buy the whole menu of Taco Bell with twenty bucks."

"Well then, *yo quiero Taco Bell, mi amigo!* Let's live más!"

She's about to cross the street over to the little Taco Bell when a car honks. Dipper quickly pulls her back on to the sidewalk just as the car speeds by.

"Oh *Schnitzel!*"

He holds her. Hugs her tight against his frame for a moment because *geez*. He takes a deep breath, inhaling her hair, as they pat each other's back.

"You okay?" he asks as they start to pull apart.

“Yeah, I’m good.”

They make a big show of looking both ways (twice) before sprinting across the street and into the restaurant. Mabel skips straight to a table, dragging Dipper with her.

“You wanna go half ‘n half, Dips?”

“No, I’ll pay for you.”

But she’s already emptying her jacket pockets on the table. In seconds the counter is covered in a roll of peel-off stickers, loads of candy wrappers, a baggie filled with unopened candy, a tube of pink lip gloss, squares upon squares of temporary tattoos, her cell phone, a ripped pink *Hello Kitty* cell phone case, a bottle of purple nail polish, blue and red sharpies, a crumpled peacock feather, tons of jelly bracelets of every color of the rainbow, a tampon (okay, he didn’t need to see that), the tiny top hat piece from the *Monopoly* board game (?), a silver ring that looks like it came out of a gumball machine, a small clear shaker filled with pink and silver glitter, and *finally* a white and yellow polka dotted coin purse.

Okay.

She opens the tiny bag, pouting as she looks inside it before giggling.

“Yeah, Dip. I’ll pay ya back later.”

He nods with a grin. She stuffs everything back inside her pockets before tossing her jacket on the back of a chair.

Already knowing what she wants, he leaves to go order and returns a few minutes later with a tray of food. He hands her an empty paper cup and she frowns.

“*Dipper*, I wanted a baja blast.”

“Yeah, I know. Apparently they’re out or something.”

“Boo on them. Boo on them and their non-freeze having souls!”

He takes the cup away from her, going to fill it with pink lemonade and his own with Dr. Pepper. Soon they’re sitting down together in a comfortable silence, letting the softly playing radio overhead fill the void of talking as they unwrap their food. She props her feet up, using his knees as a foot stool as she reclines comfortably in her chair. He takes a few bites of his chicken burrito before looking at her bare feet underneath the table. She had taken off her slip-ons. He smiles despite wanting to shove her feet off him and tell her to put her shoes back on, because that’s *gross* Mabel (they’re in a eatery for goodness sake).

He looks up at the sound of her chuckling after reading her mild sauce packet. He watches her wrist flick up and down whilst shaking the packet, and before anything suggestive can creep into his mind, she rips it open with her teeth. She starts humming *Survivor by Destiny’s Child* with a look of concentration in her eyes, tongue poking out, as she squeezes the sauce on one of her nacho cheese Doritos tacos.



It's not until she looks up at him that he realizes that he's staring... and grinning like a dope. After a second of eye contact she smiles back and his stomach flutters.

He still isn't one hundred percent that she feels the same, but... To hell with it! Life is stupidly short and fragile, and he should take a chance. Who cares if Taco Bell is probably the least romantic place in the world?! She's beautiful, fun, talented and perfect (well, maybe not **perfect**, but *100 percent perfect for him*).

So he opens his mouth.

"Mabel, I..." Oh god, just say it. "I love you."

"Love you too, Dip," she replies casually, taking a loud slurp of her drink before tossing him another grin.

"No, Mabel, no I... I *think*... No, I know that I'm *in* love with you."

Her grin falters slightly. A nervous laugh escapes her lips. She digs the heels of her feet into his legs. She then cackles loudly, smacking his hand.

"Good one, Dip."

When he doesn't respond, she blinks.

"C'mon Dipper, stop yankin' my chain."

Silence.

"... Seriously?"

He drops his head.

"Oh. *Oh*. You ain't kidding are ya?"

Dipper shakes his head, eyes glued to her colorful toenails.

“Whoa. Oh wow. Wow, Dip. Just *wow*.”

His head lowers as she spirals into a loop of disbelief, a chorus of *whoa*’s and *wow*’s. And okay, maybe it was a bad idea to tell her. She’s kind of freaking out, and really, what did he expect to happen? He should probably try to laugh this off. He should say that he was kidding and pretend he’s some kind of prank master (two for two in a weekend of fake romance themed ruses).

“Oh wow, man. I think. . . I think I’m in lo—”

His head snaps up, a grin breaking across his face, a rush of intense joy filling his body as their eyes connect over tacos and sodas. Even though her sentence is cut off by her phone blaring the sounds of pigs, there’s no doubt in his mind what she was about to say. He’s about to jump across the table and pull her into the most grand of kisses with a happy tune playing in the background.

But he doesn’t, because someone yells out a hog call in the middle of restaurant.

“*Soo-eeey!*”

Mabel practically falls out of her chair, she jumped up so fast. A man comes barreling towards her, picking Mabel up in a tight embrace and swings her around. When he places her back to the ground, she takes a step back.

“Justin!” she says flabbergasted. “How did you. . . *What?* What are you doing here?”

“I came to get you!” he tells her, like it was obvious. She glares at him, her hands on her hips and he rolls his eyes. “I didn’t know you were *in here* though. Calm down, Oinkers.”

Oinkers?!

“It’s not like I got you traced or anything. Just wanted to get some grub before finding you, but here you are! Ha, we’re so in sync!”

Justin laughs a hearty laugh. He picks up Mabel’s taco and notices Dipper sitting dumbfounded at the table. He smiles down at Dipper, green eyes shining as he takes a bite of the stolen taco. Dipper blinks, realizing he’s the guy from Mabel’s phone, *Just-In LOVE*.

“Hey, man.” He greets with his mouth full. “What’s your name?”

Dipper doesn’t really know who this guy is, but Mabel certainly doesn’t look happy to see him. She looks angry, but also stunned. She looks like she’s just seen a ghost, or just been punched in the gut. It’s enough to make Dipper glare at the hand this Justin guy extends for a handshake.

“I’m Dipper,” he replies sternly, taking Justin’s hand with the firmest grip he could manage. And maybe it’s because she was seconds away of declaring her love, or maybe it’s his natural need to deflect this guy just in case he’s some kind of crazy stalker, but Dipper adds, “Mabel’s boyfriend.”

“Oh? That’s funny.” Justin chuckles out in disbelief, cocking his head to the side .
“Cause *I’m* her *fiancé*.”

Part 6

“Her wha-what?” Dipper blinks dumbfounded.

“Justin Love,” he declares with a smug grin.

Justin releases Dipper’s hand, and it falls lifelessly into his lap. He’s staring blankly at the smiling man before him.

He’s not much taller than Dipper, short and stocky like a light weight UFC fighter. The top of his low cut brown hair is dyed a fluorescent blue. There’s a mole on his temple, and on his neck. Each of his slightly big ears has an earring (a black stoned stud in his left, and a purple star shaped stud in the right). Scruff lines his jaw. His white *Nightmare Before Christmas* hoodie is rolled up at the sleeves, revealing defined muscles. Red Converses, faded and dirty, adorn his feet. His dark green eyes are playful, his crooked grin even more so. *Oh god.*

This was Mabel’s **fiancé**?

“Ack! No, he isn’t!” Mabel practically screams at Dipper, her arms flailing wildly. She turns to Justin. “No, you’re *not*.”

He’s not?

Justin’s response is to laugh as he bites into the taco again, shaking his head. A glint in his eye, Justin turns his full attention back to Mabel.

“*Oh ho ho*, Oinkers!” he teases in that *someone’s been naughty* tone. “Babe! You didn’t tell him about us?”

Her face is red. She glances at Dipper who’s still sitting like a statue at the table. His brain is failing to really process what’s happening. This guy, this Justin, this person Dipper’s never heard of... asked his sister to marry her... and she said yes? She said yes?! Oh man, Dipper thinks he’s going to throw up.

Mabel frowns and snaps her eyes back to Justin, swatting her taco out of his hand and knocking it on to the table. He waves his injured hand, pouting.

“Babe?!”

“Don’t ‘Babe’ me, Justin!” Mabel hisses, yanking him by the collar till they were face to face. “What the hey-hey are you doing here? I told you not to come!”

“Whoa, Oinkers, calm down,” he says with an odd amount of humor in his voice, easing her hand off his hoodie. “If I had known this was a *romantic rendezvous*, I wouldn’t have.”

Justin then shrugs, pulling a chair from a neighboring table to their’s. He sits in the backwards chair, leaning over to Dipper to whisper, “Sorry you had to find out like this, man. *But* she ultimately came up here to break up with you.”

He pats Dipper on the back before giving Dipper’s shoulder a reassuring squeeze. “I know it’s hard, but you’ll live through this. Mabel’s an awesome lady, but you’re too late. It’s not your fault, you just moved too slow, man. You took too long. *If ya liked it, then ya should’ve put a ring on it*—Beyoncé Knowles.”

Did he just quote a song like it was some kind of philosophical line from the work of Aristotle? Why is he even trying to comfort Dipper anyway? Why is Dipper nodding dumbly along as he talks? Snap out of it, Dipper!

But he can’t snap out of his daze. Things aren’t really sinking in correctly. His mind’s a jumbled mess of wedding bells and firecrackers.

“So we cool, Mr. Boyfriend?” Justin asks, picking up a piece of the broken taco off the table. Dipper feels himself nod. “Cool.”

Justin glances over to Mabel who’s still standing, sputtering nonsensical sounds as she stares at the two males sitting together. Justin gestures for her to take a seat as he takes a large bite. She falls silently back into her chair. Her hands are jittery when she unwrap her second Doritos taco. She doesn’t move to eat it after she has it open, however. The twins sit silently, staring down at their food as they listen the Justin munch on his free lunch.

“Ha, this silence is getting awkward,” Justin laughs. A moment later he’s beat boxing in between bites, humming a tune while he chews. Dipper looks over to him, watching this guy bounce in his chair as he eats. It dawns on Dipper that Justin is, *well*, kind of silly and annoying. But it’s a familiar annoyance... that makes Dipper’s guts knot and churn and forces his cracked heart sink.

Dipper’s eyes travel over to where Justin’s free hand is covering Mabel’s on the table.

You took too long. You moved too slow.

He looks up at Mabel’s face. Their eyes connect, and Dipper couldn’t tell what she’s thinking.

You’re too late.

“So what’s the plan for the day,” Justin asks, licking his fingers. “This *is* the last time you’re going to see Oinkers, right?”

Dipper's gut churns again.

"So we should all just chill together today, if it's not too painful on you. Maybe at the end of the day, we'll all be buds. Ha, you could come to the wedding! I bet you have the best stories about her."

He can't breathe.

"Oh! Tell me how you met! I *gotta* know, man. I bet it's no where near as awesome as how I met Mabel, though. Our school has a little farm thing, and we both donated pigs to live there and the pigs had *babies!* Like, *bam!* I'm a grandparent! So I rush down, but Mabel was already at the pig pen when I got there, and when I saw her oinking at my... Sorry, *our* grandkids, ha, it was magic."

His heart's withering.

"So, tell me, how'd you guys meet?" Justin asks earnestly. "What were you, the high school boyfriend or something?"

"Oh um... I..."

Dipper shakes his head, squeezing his eyes shut, and his brain finally comes back online.

Dipper slams his hands on the table, standing up. No. Just no. This is the most stupid thing! He isn't going to sit here and trade stories with this guy! Romantic stories, by the way, Dipper *didn't actually have*. Or will ever have! And this is all just... *Whatever!*

He gets up, heading towards the door. His dramatic exit ruined ever so slightly by him tripping out the exit on his untied shoelaces.

Mabel stomps into her shoes as she yells to a Justin not to follow them. He hears Mabel's quick steps behind him.

"Dipper!" she calls as he storms across the street. "Dip, wait up!"

He stops and turns so abruptly that she collides into him. His hands land on her arms, steadying her. They drop away quickly, as if touching her burns. He steps away from her, pushing her hands off his chest. She flinches. And that split second of melancholy that crosses her face is almost enough to make him crumble to the ground.

But he can't have her touching him right now. He just can't.

She recovers fast, shaking her head. Her face becomes determined, and she grabs hold of his shirt.

"He's *not* my fiancé!"

"Well he certainly thinks he is!" Dipper huffs. Stepping out of her hold, he glares down at her hands, but none of her fingers held jewelry. "Where's the ring?"

"Ugh! It's in my coat pocket. But that's not important."

“Yes it *is*, Mabel! It’s *very* important!” He’s yelling. Oh god, he’s yelling at her. “Because you’re *fucking engaged* to some guy I’ve never even heard of!”

“I’ve told you about Justin!” she yells back defensively.

“Well obviously not enough!” he screams even louder than before. Stop yelling at her. *Stop yelling.* Stop yelling at her, god damn it. *Calm down.* Try to breathe. God, why can’t he breathe? “And you can’t just accept rings from guys, and not be engaged, Mabel!”

“I didn’t accept anything! *Double fudge on a stick*, Dipper, I didn’t even give him an answer! I was actually trying to break up with him when he just slipped a ring on my finger!”

“And what did you tell him?” he asks, his voice still angry sounding, but at least it came out at a decent decibel.

“I... I told that I’ll *think* about it!”

... *Think* about it?

“And he’s been calling and texting me everyday since, popping up every stinking where I go. I use to think it romantic, but *blargh!* It’s so annoying! I’m surprised he hasn’t come out here yet,” she stops talking for a second to glance at Taco Bell, but no ones exiting. She huffs. “I’ve ignore most of his calls and junk! You’d think he’d take the hint!”

“Why didn’t you just tell him no?”

She groans, tossing her head back. Her headband falls to the sidewalk with a soft clatter. Neither bothers to pick it up.

“I don’t know, okay! It’s not like he’s a horrible person. He’s a pretty cool, awesomely fun-tastic guy when he’s *not* my boyfriend. I just... I didn’t want to hurt his feelings. I’m not great with break ups to begin with, so rebuffing a proposal is like *what!* I didn’t want to funk up his heart.”

“Mabel... Mabel, you can’t just do that! You should’ve just told him no. You should’ve told him the truth. That guy thinks you’re going to marry him! He’s in love with you, and you’re toying with his emotions!”

“I am not!”

“*Yes, you are!* This guy loves you, and you lead him to believe you love him back, but you don’t Mabel! You’re just placating him. You’re so busy trying to *people please*, that all you’re going to do is end up hurting him way worse! You shouldn’t lie about being in love with someone just because you don’t want hurt them. You shouldn’t—”

“I would *never* lie about a thing like that!” she yells so loud the pigeons on top of the buildings fly off in panic. “I never told him I loved him! I’ve never told anyone that! *He’s not you!*”

She's breathing heavily, her hands folded into fists, her body convulsing as she tries to calm down. He stares at her wide eyed, his rapidly beating heart skipping a few beats. He then pulls her to him, locking his arms around her. Her body's still shaking, so he holds her tighter. And he knows people are staring, gawking and gossiping at this spectacle across the street from Taco Bell. He hides his face in her hair, reciting an apology over and over.

"No, I'm sorry," she mumbles into his chest. "I should've told you everything when I came here. And I... I didn't come here just because you were feeling down, Dip."

He steps back, taking her with him, so he's leaning against the brick wall of the building behind them (instead out in the middle of the sidewalk), hidden in the shade. He lowers his hands from her back to her waist. They look at each other, and it hits him again, just as strong.

A joyous feeling spreads from his chest throughout his entire body. He can feel it tingling his insides, and zapping his fingertips. His heart's now a fluttering mess, like a hummingbird is flapping in his chest. His mind's a chorus of hallelujahs.

She loves him.

She's *in* love with him!

The urge to kiss her rocks through his entire being and... No wait, she's talking. Better wait until she's finished. Good boyfriends listen.

Wait, does this mean he's her boyfriend now? He is, right?

"I didn't even start up the... What did you call it, a uh ruse? Yeah, I didn't even do it *just* for you. I kind of did it for me. I mean, I kind of bombed my midterm exams. And my roommate's a jerk-face, always stealing my nail polish and stinking up the room with her cigarette smoke. And then there's the whole *Justin* thing." She shakes her head, making a face. "I just wanted to get away and have some fun... And I *really* wanted to be with my bro."

He smiles at her as she sighs.

"So yeah, sorry for... I dunno, lying? Using you? Hmm, none of those sound quite right. Just, yeah... Sorry, bro."

He rests his forehead against hers.

"Mabel, I don't care why you came. I'm just glad you did."

She smiles impishly, looking at him through her lashes.

"Yeah, you're just saying that because you're in *loooove* with me."

"Yeah," he whispers, his voice light yet serious. "I am."

She coyly bites her lip. He tilts his head, foreheads still touching, and the tip of his nose brushes against hers. She softly giggles. Her breath tickles his skin, his lips.

"I love you too, Dip."

Her arms ease over his shoulders, and around his neck. He glides his sweaty palms up and down her back, resting the antsy fingers back on her waist. Man, why is he so nervous all of sudden? They're staring tenderly into each others eyes, breaking contact every couple of milliseconds to glance at the other's lips. He wants to kiss her. He wants to kiss her so badly. More than anything, he wants to seal this deal... If only he could move his stupid big head enough to do it.

He's not sure what the problem is. He had done it just last night. Hard and without hesitation, mind you. But now he's kind of choking, laughing and looking away from her nervously.

She giggles again, a sound so light it's carried away by the cool wind blowing over them. "Kiss me, ya dork," she mumbles, closing both her eyes and the gap between their lips.

And he does. He kisses her back instantly. Her lips are soft against his when he pulls her even tighter into their embrace. They cling to each other, gently licking and sucking each other's lips until Mabel swirls her tongue into his mouth. He drowns in her sweet taste, his mind fogging over. He moans through the kiss, her tongue playing with his and her hands ruffling his hair. She hums a soft moan of her own, an instant reaction to his, and the vibration electrifies Dipper's entire body. He holds her tighter and tighter, just in case he might wake up to find her only a vision. Even though he's sandwiched between her and a brick wall, she still doesn't feel close enough. She can never be close enough. She's biting his lower lip when his hands inch lower to cup her behind, squeezing the soft flesh through her skirt as he lifts her up into him, forcing her on her tip toes.



Mabel breaks away, a laugh erupting out of her. He's breathing hard, invigorated. He dives in for another quick kiss before it sinks in and he snaps back into reality... They're in public, kissing, with his hands on her ass. He joins in on her laughter, dropping his hands

away from *there*, and back to some place respectable... like his pockets. Mabel steps away, picking up her headband and his hat he hadn't realized been knocked off from the ground. He catches the eye of a disapproving elderly woman walking past them when Mabel's hands hit his hat, and Dipper's grin widens.

Lady, you don't know the half of it.

"So," Dipper starts, glancing over at the sign displaying a purple bell.

"*So*," Mabel mimics him, adjusting her hair décor.

"What now?"

She follows his line of vision, and her smile becomes a little less bright. "We can make a run for it?"

"I think you know that's not going to work... You know what you need to do, Mabel."

"*Ugh*, yeah... The whole *heart smashing* thing. I dunno, Dip. Doesn't it seem kind of mean? He'd think I'm choosing you over him."

"You are choosing me over him."

She playfully punches his arm, but his face still bears a smug grin.

"Am not... Well, *technically*, yeah I am. But, it seems like a butt move to go back in there and just break up with him. He *did* come all this way."

"Wait," Dipper's brows furrow in confusion, his grin becoming a flat line. "Are you saying you're *not* going to break up with him?"

"Of course I'm going to, but I think that maybe it would be best if I did it, I dunno, tomorrow when we're back at school."

"Mabel, I don't think..."

"Dipper, just let me do it my way. If I'm going to have to totally obliterate Justin's heart with my rejection bombs, I'd rather do it somewhere where he can at least fall into a bed of hay and let the sad out."

Dipper sighs and nods, not really knowing where that leaves them.

"So we're playing a new game now. A new ruse to ruse," Mabel chirps, locking an arm around his and dragging him back across the street.

"And that is?"

"Now we have to pretend you're *not* my boyfriend."

And he couldn't help but laugh, because they're probably going to have to play this game for much longer than just the weekend.

Not that he's complaining.

Part 7

“Well that was dramatic, Mr. Boyfriend,” Justin chuckles when the twins make it back to the table.

“Uh, yeah, sorry about that,” Dipper responds automatically, not really certain how to act now. He still feels high from what just occurred outside. However, as far as Justin knew, all that happened out there was a consoling conversation between two exes. So it would be weird for Dipper to be grinning like an idiot, right? Should he be pretending to be sad or angry? But Mabel’s still latched to his arm, leaning her weight into him, and filling his insides with tingling warmth. So maybe he should try to play it cool instead? Yeah, play it cool. He can do that.

“And it’s Dipper.”

“Right, right,” Justin nods nonchalantly, biting his thumb. It’s then that Dipper notices his burrito, along with the cups, and food wrappings are gone. Justin stands, wiping his hands on his jeans and smiling at the pair.

He takes hold of Mabel’s free hand and she slowly detaches herself from Dipper, giving her brother a sad smile as she goes to stand beside Justin.

Maybe pretending to be sad won’t be such a feat after all.

“So everything’s good, man? You’re cool?”

Before Dipper can nod, his stomach growls loudly. Justin chuckles at the sound.

“Oh man, sorry Mr. Boyfriend’s tummy. I totally just crashed your lunch, didn’t I?” He fishes a ten dollar bill out of pocket, handing it to Dipper. “Okay, how about a lunch time redux? Get some grub for you and Oinkers, and let’s start this thing over.”

So a few minutes later the three are back to sitting together, Dipper quietly eating as Justin talks and talks. As bizarre as the situation is, it’s incredibly easy to get through. *Too* easy, actually.

As Justin and Mabel laugh in the midst of Justin's story about the pigs, Mabel's bare foot snakes its way into his pants leg and up Dipper's calf. Dipper blushes at the tiny shocks caused by the light touches, glancing at Mabel and then her not-really-fiancé. Mabel winks, a little too obviously, at Dipper. Justin's still chatting away, none the wiser.

Biting his lip, he considers returning the favor. Could Justin really be so oblivious that he wouldn't notice this happening under the table? *Maybe?* Taking a sip from his new drink, he decides that he could probably get away with it. Mabel did! Dipper can be just as smooth and sneaky as his sister. Right? Of course! He can be suave. He can be slick.

So Dipper eases his foot towards Mabel, only for his foot to collide with Justin's Converses. *Oh no.* In the split second it takes for Justin to turn to face him, Dipper frantically slides his foot back, knee jerking and hitting the table. *Fuck.* He hisses as the pain stings him. The table barely even shakes, all of the impact bearing down on his bone.

"Dip, you okay?"

He nods, rubbing his shin gingerly.

"Whoa Mr. Boyfriend, if ya wanted to play footsie, you could've just asked."

The color drains from Dipper's face, and Mabel snorts out a laugh despite the slight worry in her eyes. But there didn't seem to be a need to worry, for Justin laughs at his little joke before stealing a string of lettuce that's fallen off Mabel taco.

Did Justin really not... Did he honestly believe that Dipper's foot *wasn't* on its way to Mabel's? Could this guy honestly be so... Calm? Naïve? Cool? Laid back? Stupid?

... *Trusting?*

Dipper stomach knots up. He keeps his eyes on his food when Justin pats his shoulder and asks, "But seriously, man. You good?" Dipper nods, and Justin seamlessly transitions back into the story he was telling.

This is why Mabel should've been up front about this whole thing. *This* is why Dipper wanted her to end it immediately, besides the other apparent reasons. Because this isn't the same as putting on a show for Ann and Jean. This is... It's... He's not certain what it is, but it's making him feel bad. His eyes somehow find themselves on Mabel and Justin's joined hands. Dipper frowns at the sight for the second time that day, but for an entirely different reason than the last time.

Dipper's eyes snap up at the sound of oinking, mistaking it for Mabel's phone going off. Instead, he sees that it's Justin, his nose scrunched up as he makes the best pig noises Dipper's ever heard. He watches as Justin continues to snort, eyes closed, and going in to give Mabel Eskimo kisses. It's a gesture Dipper can easily imagine Mabel initiating or happily going along with. It's really all too effortless for Dipper to picture a time where these two were a cute, merry couple. And that *might* have made him a tad disheartened, if Mabel's face wasn't painted with mild annoyance, her eyes rolling as their noses bump and slide against one another. Justin then tilts his head, puckering his lips and...

“*Bloop!*” Mabel squeaks, smashing her palm into Justin’s face. “Hold on there, cowboy. I think you’re forgetting we got company.”

“Ha! Oh yeah.” He chuckles, shifting his attention to Dipper to flash an apologetic smile. “My bad, Mr. Boyfriend. That must have been weird to watch.”

“Yeah, it definitely was,” Dipper hears himself talking. With the shock of everything gone, Dipper realizes that maybe it’s just something about Justin that causes him to respond impulsively. Because his lips keep moving even after he knows he should stop talking. The question boggling his mind falls freely out of him, “How can you be so cool about this? About Mabel and... me?”

Mabel’s mouth goes agape at the inquiry. She’s staring at him like he’s lost his mind, the expression clearly reading *Bro, what the heckle?*

Justin smirks, shrugging as he reclines in his chair.

“Me and Babe weren’t exactly exclusive when I proposed. I knew she had some loose ends to tie up and junk. Plus, I ain’t much for jealousy. *It ain’t easy being green* –Kermit the Frog.”

“You had other boyfriends?” Dipper asks his sister, truly surprised. Finding a date hadn’t been much of a problem for her lately, and he tried not to have a problem with her social life (or the fact that she somehow gained the title kissing queen from her friends) because he knew there really isn’t a reason to be upset about it. However, Mabel dating more than one guy at a time didn’t seem to fit her style. Ignoring current circumstances, that is.

“N-not really. Justin had other girlfriends, and I had... Well, I had you,” Mabel mutters, a blush burning her cheeks. A new grin is splitting his face when her words sink in. He reaches out for her hand, giving her fingers a light squeeze. Her eyes lock onto his, her sweet smiling face making his insides flip.

Justin coughs, bringing them back to reality and their hands spring apart. His head cocks to the side, bewilderment crossing his eyes before he’s standing and beaming again.

“Oinkers, can you get us some of those cinnamon twist things before we head out?”

“Uh, yeah. Sure thing, *Justinator*.”

Dipper watches as Mabel stands, slips on her jacket, and walk to the cashier. Before she’s even half way there, Justin slaps Dipper heartily on the back. He hovers over Dipper, his wide green eyes and over zealous grin glaring down at Dipper.

“Man, I can’t believe it! We’re in a legit love triangle! This is totally a Jackson/McCartney thing me and you got going here. Ha, isn’t this awesome?”

Dipper blinks.

“Um we’re... what?”

It's now Justin's turn to blink in confusion. He then laughs, shaking Dipper by the shoulder. "You know," he says before singing, "*But we both can not have her. So it's one or the other...*"

"Um..."

"Dude," Justin stalls, his face falling and contorting into one of distaste, eyeballing Dipper as if he had just crawled up out of a sewer. "*The Girl is Mine*. Written and made by MJ. Michael Jackson. *The king* of pop! Featuring Paul McCartney! From the *Beatles*! Mr. Boyfriend, *please* tell you at least have *an idea* of what I'm talking about here."

Dipper lets out a nervous laugh, rubbing the side of his neck. Of course he knows what Justin's talking about. But didn't Justin basically say he saw through their little ruse? (They really are horrid actors). And his reaction is... This isn't normal, right? This guy isn't normal. How should Dipper even respond to this? Think Dipper! Just... *Keep playing it cool*.

"Yeah, I-I know the song."

"Ha, cool. *We're not going to fight about this, okay.*"

Wha-what? Fight about... Oh wait. By that expectant look on Justin's face, he's just quoting the song. Okay. Uh... How did it go again?

"I'm a lover, not a fighter?"

Justin laughs, nodding in approval, so Dipper must have gotten it right. It's then that Mabel returns with the churros in hand. Justin wraps his arm around Mabel, giving Dipper a quick wink and... Uh oh.

Did Dipper somehow just agree to some kind of competition with Justin?

"C'mon Mr. Boyfriend, lets go wander over yonder."

They walk aimlessly down the sidewalk, randomly waltzing in and out of the little shops and boutiques of interest. Justin stays glued to Mabel side, making sure to keep some kind of physical contact between them. Dipper's forced to watch as Justin holds her hand. Forced to stand by while he whispers things in her ear that causes her to genuinely smile or giggle. His fingers played with her hair each chance they got. Inside the stores, whenever Mabel tries on a hat or sunglasses, Justin would cup her face and gaze at her for a moment before quoting a line from some song about how beautiful she is, to which there seems to be an endless supply. And almost every few minutes, Justin will glance at Dipper, prompting the green eyed male to hum or, even worse, sing *The Girl is Mine* with a knowing grin slapped to his face.

The tinge of guilt and sympathy Dipper felt earlier gave way to annoyance. Even now as they peruse the items in a second hand shop, Dipper's lips are cemented in a frown as he glares at a singing Justin.

Mabel, to her credit, manages to keep all of Justin's advances G rated (reminding her not-fiancé of Dipper's presence each time he tried to so much as kiss her cheek). She smiles sympathetically over at her moping brother, shrugging her shoulders when Justin wanders over to a collection of vinyl records. Dipper sighs, walking away from a hat rack to stand beside her. Her hand seeks his out, giving it a reassuring squeeze. She apologizes without saying a word, her tiny smile causing Dipper to have one of his own. She turns back to the bin of vintage jewelry, digging around one handedly.

"Oh Dipper, look at these!" Mabel bounces in excitement, holding up two silver pendants in the shape of a star and a moon. He takes them from her, the metal cool in the palm of his hand. Etched crudely into them were tiny hearts, barely noticeable even with it inches in front of his face.

"We should get these."

"Ah! Yes, agreed!" Mabel chimes merrily, hugging him as she continues to bounce. "We can wear them everyday! So when we're apart and get all *oh donkey spittle, me and my honey bug are so far apart*, we can just look down at these necklaces and *bam-o!* A feeling of unity."

He laughs.

"Not sure when I'll ever talk like that, but yeah okay. I like that plan."

"Bloop de boop!" She chuckles, slipping one of the pendants over his head. The ornament lands right above his heart.

"Mabel, don't we have to pay for these first?"

She puts hers on anyway, waving a hand in dismissal. "No worries, Dippity Dip. We'll buy them on our way out."

Smiling, Dipper looks down at his necklace and sure enough he feels a light tingle. His lips then curl to the side when he notices something. He taps her pendant, leaving his fingerprint on her star.

"Your's is bigger than mine."

"Well *duh*, Dipper," she chuckles. "Alpha twin is large and in charge!"

"Yeah okay, shush shh shh. Not so loud."

"Oh Dipper, relax." Mabel giggles at him, tipping upwards and planting a peck on the tip of his nose. "Everything's fine."

And things really did feel fine. When they buy their necklaces, Dipper catches himself humming the song Justin's been taunting him with all afternoon. The look in Justin's eye told Dipper he had noticed it too. Dipper keeps humming it, a smug grin plastered on his

face as they exit the shop. A howl of wind hits them the moment they're outside. It blows Dipper's hat right off his head, Mabel catching it before it could fly too far off. He nods his thanks, looking up at the suddenly cloudy sky.

"I think we should head back. It looks like it might rain," Dipper tells them as he tugs his hat back on.

He catches Justin staring at his forehead, and subconsciously lowers the hat's visor. Justin keeps staring though, looking a tad bit confused... and maybe even a little bit ill? But he snaps out of it a moment later when thunder rolls. He pulls out his cell phone, checking the time.

"Actually, *we* should get going to the airport." He says, taking hold of Mabel's hand. "Ship out time is in about an hour or so."

"Um, what?" Mabel huffs, wiggling her hand free, and he doesn't give her any resistance.

"Babe, I told ya I came here to get you. You weren't planning on just staying here forever?" Justin laughs weakly, his eyes not nearly as bright as it had been a few minutes ago.

"*No*. But I told you not to come here in the first place, so forgive my shock that you bought me a ticket home without consulting me at all, bonk brains."

"Mabel," Justin says, no longer trying to smile. His eyes flickering towards Dipper, he whispers. "I think we need to talk."

"Oh," Mabel's eyes widen, and she nods. In that moment, Dipper knew something was transpiring between Mabel Justin. He just didn't know exactly what. She turns to Dipper, placing a hand on his chest. "I'll meet ya at your dorm, Dip."

"I'll just wait."

Mabel shakes her head, her hair band sliding as if to fall. He readjusts it on her head, looking at her determined eyes. She pats his chest reassuringly. Her fingers curl around his pendant when she speaks again.

"I'll see ya in a few minutes. I promise. Kay?"

Reluctantly, he nods. "Okay."

The walk alone back is slow and silent. Thunder echoes over the cloudy sky. Rain drops begin to fall in a light drizzle. The water seeps through Dipper's two shirts, the damp clothes clinging to him like an awkward layer of second skin. He isn't certain why he isn't running out of the rain. But there honestly isn't any reason to rush.

Puddles form beneath his feet as he leisurely strolls to his dorm, the cracks in his soles letting bits of water in to be soaked up by his socks. The dark sky becomes alight with a shock of white lighting. Thunder blares a few seconds later, and Dipper shivers. Okay, maybe he should pick up the pace before he ends up with pneumonia.

But by the time he makes it to the ground floor of his dormitory, he's completely soaked.

"Why is it so cold in here?" he wonders aloud when stepping inside the elevator. Pressing the button for his floor, Dipper leans against the wall. Closing his eyes, he sighs. What could Justin possibly want to talk about that Mabel felt it necessary to send Dipper on his way?

She'll be back before long, though. And that's all that matters.

He smiles, humming a certain eighties tune in small victory. The elevator chimes, making Dipper open his eyes and quickly makes note that this isn't his floor. The doors glide open, revealing a blonde girl waving at someone walking back into their dorm room.

Oh God, no.

Dipper stops breathing as the girl turns fully around, and because nothing can go one hundred percent his way today, it's Ann.

They stare blankly at each other. Dipper's leaning against the wall as if paralyzed, while she clutches a pink binder to her chest for what feels like an eternity. But then the doors begin to slide shut. He almost thinks its going to close all the way, but at the last minute she jumps inside. She leans in front of him, pressing her floor's button, but doesn't move to put any real space between them. He can feel her eyes on him as she fusses with her slightly messy hair.

It's uncomfortably awkward.

"Some weather we're having today." *And it gets worse.* "You look drowned. You know, they sell tiny umbrellas at the student store. Easy to carry around, just in case."

Dipper lets out an exhausted breath.

"Ann?"

"Y-yes?"

"Can you please just leave me alone?"

He's really tired pretending. He doesn't want to fake his way through any more conversations. Ruses weren't meant to last.

And she falls silent for a tick, only to shake her head.

“I’m sorry, you know, for yesterday. And the day before. . . For everything. I shouldn’t have said those things or accused you of anything. I’m sure Jean’s been saying all kinds of awful things about me to you, and I just. . . I just don’t want you to think that I’m,” she sighs as her voice trails off, her eyes becoming misty. “I would like for us to stay friends, Dipper.”

There’s a part of him that wants to tell her that he doesn’t need her apologies. An even bigger part that wants to tell her that Jean’s *never* spoken ill of her. That she’s kind of an idiot for letting Jean go, because he’s actually a pretty cool guy. Not that she would even know, since she spent their entire relationship trying to change him!

And really, there’s no way for them to *stay friends*. Dipper’s always thought of her as Jean’s annoying girlfriend, *not* his friend.

But what would be the point in saying any of that?

She’s bowing her head lower and lower as each millisecond ticks by, looking up at him through her lashes. One manicured hand clutching her binder, the other picking invisible lint off her university pullover.

He places a hand on her shoulder as a way of saying they were fine, and maybe with time the two could actually become friends (though he sincerely doubts it). Her head instantly pops up. Their eyes connect and suddenly Dipper’s all too aware of how small this damn elevator is, his back is literally against the wall. She grabs his hand just as he tries to drop it from her shoulder.

“Uh, Ann. . . ?” Dipper squirms.

“You’re freezing,” she whispers, her binder hitting the floor with a thud as her glossy lips come crashing onto his.

Part 8

What the hell is happening?

Shocked, Dipper stands frozen. Her lips are warm against his cool flesh. He stares at her with wide eyes. Her closed eye lids fill his vision, blurring in and out of focus. A stray blonde curl tickles the tip of his nose. He blinks.

Okay, this is just insane.

He lifts his hands from his sides, grabbing hold of her pointy elbows. He squeezes as if to pull her away, but he doesn't. He doesn't get the chance.

He sneezes.

"Bloody hell!"

Ann flings back gasping, stepping away to spit and wipe her face in disgust.

Well, that's one way to break a kiss.

Dipper wipes his mouth on his soaked sleeve, biting back a smile, before he rubs his red nose.

"Sorry," he says with a sniffle, unable to keep the astonished laughter out of his voice. That hadn't been on purpose. Oh god. It was actually pretty gross. And he actually does feel sorry. He can't even muster up the energy to be mad about the kiss, because *he just sneezed all over her face!* Probably even in her mouth.

"Sick," Ann mumbles, giving her face one last good swipe. She frantically digs into her pocket, getting out a small bottle of Germ-X and spreading it all over her hands and cheeks. She then looks up at Dipper who's still leaning against the wall, his face somehow looking both amused and horrified. She blinks a few times, disappointment flittering across her eyes. She then steps over to the other side of the elevator, sighing as she weaves a hand through her hair. She then laughs, shaking her head. "*Wow, that was really stupid of me.*"

"Yeah, it kind of was."

The doors chime open, Dipper pushes off the wall and exits without another word. Ann's right behind him though, her binder back under her arm as they walk towards his dorm.

"I don't know what came over me. I know I've apologized to you a million times over, Dipper, but that kiss was. . . I don't know why I did that. Maybe I just thought—"

"What? That we'd kiss and magically fall in love?"

"Completely idiotic, I know."

They take a few steps in silence, stopping in front of his door. Ann stands awkwardly by his side. He looks her over as he scoops his keys out of his pants. She's blushing, clutching her binder to her chest, and staring at the drop of sauce he hadn't realized was on his jeans.

"You know, Dipper, I use to think that I'd be so good for you; that you somehow needed me. But I don't think we would've made a good pair after all. I mean, kissing you just then was like putting my mouth on a dead fish. You didn't respond at all, and that was just so, so. . . *clarifying.*"

Dipper shrugs.

"No offense, Ann, but I thought what happened last night should've been a big enough clue that I don't. . ." He sighs, taking a deep breath. He leaves the sentence unfinished. But honestly, even though he always tried to act civil towards her, wasn't it obvious that he never really liked her? His fingers curl around the crescent moon of his necklace. "I mean, *come on.* I think I made it pretty clear that I'm in love with my girlfriend."

She nods, looking away bashfully.

"I get it now. I do. You don't need me to be your anything. And I. . . I'll just have to live with that. So maybe I should just leave you alone for awhile. But when this passes over properly, I really would like for us to become better friends, Dipper."

She lifts up her free hand, extending it out to him. Though a tad hesitant, he takes it.

"*Just* friends."

"Just friends," Dipper repeats, giving her hand a curt shake and dropping it quickly.

Maybe they could be friends. Crazier things *have* happened. Though, he seriously doubts that's going to happen any time soon, if at all.

But it seems better to placate her for now. He didn't really know what an angry Ann is capable of, and he isn't trying to find out.

She glances at the door, sighing sorrowfully.

"I should probably be on my way, now."

“You sure you don’t want to come in to talk to Jean?” he asks, though he isn’t certain why he’s pushing the issue. Well no, that’s not true. Despite everything, Dipper still cares about Jean. At least a little bit. And even if he didn’t, living with a moping, heart broken shell of man blasting sad songs all day isn’t exactly something Dipper wants to deal with for the next odd days.

Eyes still on the door, she shakes her head.

“No I . . . I don’t think I should.”

Dipper shrugs indifferently, turning the key in the slot. He gave it a shot, at least.

“Make sure you change out of those clothes,” she tells him as she starts to walk off. “You can get pneumonia, you know.”

Okay.

“Apologize to your bird for me.”

He nods.

Bye.

“See you around, Dipper.”

Leave already!

He forces a smile, waving her off until she finally turns around to walk down the hall. Dipper lets out a relieved sigh when she disappears from sight. Opening the door, he finally walks inside his dorm. Closing and locking the door behind him, he stops short.

“Jean?”

Dipper’s roommate looks up from his spot on the living room sofa, and Dipper stares at him as if he’s looking at a ghost. Jean’s dark hair is wild and unruly, sticking up in every direction. His eyes, tinged only slightly with pink, have dark circles around them. His lanky body is swallowed in a pair of baggy pants and an oversized, wrinkly *Star Wars* graphic tee. Jean scratches the tip of nose, placing his game controller down and smiling crookedly.

“Hey, Dipper.”

“Hey,” he answers with a wide grin.

Jean’s smile grew wider, and he lifts up his controller, waving it halfheartedly.

“Wanna play?”

“Yeah. Sure.”

He makes the quick trek to the couch, plopping down beside Jean who hands him the second controller.

“Dude, you’re soaked,” Jean observes with a weak chuckle as he resets the game. Dipper just shrugs, shimmying out of his plaid over shirt and chucking it to the floor. He kicks off his wet shoes and socks, ignoring the low rumble of thunder coming from outside. Jean shakes his head with a small smile.

They start the game.

They play quietly for the first few minutes, but it soon feels just like old times. Animatedly playing and shouting with vigor, shoving each other in attempts to get ahead, Justin refusing to pause the game when Dipper goes into a bit of a sneezing frenzy, Justin endlessly teasing and laughing at Dipper’s kitten like sniffles, and Dipper using combo moves and cheat codes that make Jean yell in mock terror or anger. Twenty minutes fly by in a blink.

“Dipper, you need to stop cheating,” Jean laughs, elbowing his friend in the mist of button mashing.

“It’s not cheating, it’s skill!”

“It’s raining men! Hallelujah, it’s raining men! Amen!”

Jean pause the game, looking up at the sound of someone singing and stares at the door in confusion. Dipper lets out an exasperated sigh, standing up before the rhythmic knocking even starts. He goes to open the door, finding a drenched Mabel and Justin. Dipper steps aside, allowing them inside before shutting the door. Justin and Mabel both shake their heads like dogs, drips of water flying everywhere. They both laugh merrily, each slipping out of their respective coat and hoodie.

“Uh, hi?” Jean greets the newcomers, looking bewilderedly at blue haired guy at Mabel’s side. Dipper’s eyes widen in a panic. His heart beat speeds up as Justin casually flops on the couch, putting his muddied feet up on the little coffee table. Justin smiles his wide, cheery grin, extending his hand out to Jean.

“Hey, man. Justin Love. I’m Mabel’s. . .”

Oh no. Oh shit. This is bad.

How in the world is Dipper going to explain to Jean that his alleged girlfriend of two years has a *fucking fiancé*?! Think, Dipper! Think! *Oh man!* There’s no conceivable way that he can—

“... friend.”

Friend?

“I’m Jean,” he responds, awkwardly taking Justin’s hand to shake. Confusion is evident in Jean’s eyes when he looks questioningly at Dipper. Equally confused (although for different reasons), Dipper just shrugs. Dipper stares blankly at Justin, who’s now taking rein of the second controller.

Mabel's surprisingly warm fingers slip into his, and Dipper automatically looks down at their newly joined hands. A smile breaks across his face at the sight, widening even more when he looks up into her bright eyes.

"Hey *bro-friend*."

A nervous laugh sputters out, his cheeks rouging and his eyes rolling at the new nickname. His fingers squeeze tighter around her hand, her warmth spilling over and heating up his insides. She smiles warmly at him, stealing a quick peck.

"Hey," he whispers back.

"*Whoomp*, there it is!" Justin yells out triumphantly, standing up and dropping his controller to do a victory dance.

The moment broken, Dipper turns back to Mabel, making a face. "What is he still doing here? Doesn't he have a plane to catch?"

"*Yeah*... About that. Um, you see, Dipper, the thing is... Hmm, how should I put this?"

"*Mabel*."

"Okay, okay. The rain's pretty bad, and that donked up his leave time. So he switched for new tickets, and we're gonna jet out together in the morning. And he also *sorta, kinda* needs to stay. Here. With us. Tonight."

Oh sweet heavens, *why*?

"Also, Dip," she says, her voice becoming lower and a tad more serious, "we need to talk about the convo me and the Justinator just had."

Dipper nods, an uneasiness settling in his stomach at her words.

"Oh?"

"Yeah, I—"

"Yo, Oinkers! Mr. Boyfriend! You guys gonna join in on this or what?" Justin shouts, waving two old Nintendo 64 controllers at the twins. "I'm thinking Mario Party!"

Mabel gasps out excitedly, turning away from her brother. "Mario Par-tay!" she shouts before letting out a delighted shriek. She bounces away from Dipper to squeeze in between Jean and Justin. Dipper sighs, walking over to join them.

"Here," Mabel says while kicking the coffee table out of the way. "You can sit in front of me."

"Mabel, what about—"

"*Later*," she tells him before taking on a silly Italian accent. "It's a party time!"

“Ha, yeah man!” Justin adds.

“Come on, Dipper,” Jean chirps in. “We haven’t played on the Nintendo in ages.”

Yeah, and there’s a reason for that. A blonde, British reason. Regardless, Dippers relents and sits on the floor, settling between Mabel’s legs. Justin hands him a controller with a knowing smile.

“Okay, gents. Fair warning,” Mabel speaks while Dipper crawls over to the TV, switching off one game system for another. “I’m a total beast at this game. You guys don’t stand a chance... Oh, and I got dibs on Yoshi!”

The game goes on well into the night.

“Damn it, Yoshi!” the boys groan for what felt like the millionth time while Mabel manically laughs in victory. The last minigame ends, the television displaying Mabel’s character’s increase in gold coins. The boys watch the game’s end ceremony where, to no one’s surprise, Yoshi is deemed the superstar. As the cut scene of Yoshi and Bowser plays out, Jean yawns. It’s getting late, and they have school in the morning.

So when Mabel asks for another round, everyone declines. Dipper switches the game system and television off, stretching as he stands up.

“I’m going to bed,” Jean announces when he stands up as well. “Nice meeting you guys.”

“So long, farewell, to you, my friend. Goodbye for now, until we meet again,” Justin sings, patting Jean on the back as he walks to his room. Justin then yawns, relaxing into the newly freed space of the sofa and mumbles to no one in particular, “Out of the box.”

“So I guess you’re going to uh... Sleep on the couch, then?” Dipper asks, his voice wavering as he looks at Mabel and Justin on the couch together.

“Yeah, man. The couch is fine,” Justin responds. Justin then pats Mabel’s bare knees, and they grin at each other, making Dipper uneasy. Mabel then hops up, strolling past her brother towards his room.

“Night night, Justin,” she calls with a wave.

“Night, Babe.”

Justin kicks off his shoes, lying down completely on the sofa and using the blanket on the armrest as a pillow. He looks at a bewildered Dipper with tired eyes and a lazy grin.

“And goodnight to you too, *brother*.”

Dipper blinks. Justin snickers. Dipper sputters out a good night, stumbling to his room where he finds Mabel already lying in bed. He stares at her, dumbfounded.

“I think... Does... Does Justin know that I’m... That we’re... Oh god.”

Mabel sits up and takes hold of his hands, pulling him into bed with her.

“It’s fine, bro.”

Fine?

How could this possibly be fine?

“Mabel he... Wait. *You told him?!?*”

“Course not. Calm your horses there.” Mabel lays back down, bring him with her. She snuggles up into his chest, her arms and legs winding themselves around him. She pecks the tip of his nose. Dipper relaxes, his eyes drooping when he inhales her sweet scent mixed with rain. “He just... He just sort of figured it out. We talked. He okay with it. End over story. La la laa.”

Dipper shakes his head, easing back a little.

“Mabes, you can’t expect me to believe that he’s just okay with... *us*.”

“Trust me, Dippity dip dip. I mean, okay, he *was* pretty freaked at first. But we had a nice long chatty chat. S’all good, bro.”

“Huh. Really?”

“*Psh*. I told you he was a cool guy,” she laughs, lightly shoving his shoulder.

He shakes his head.

His mind overflows with all the negative possibilities. Someone knowing is dangerous. Even if Justin is nice/weird enough to keep their secret, he could blackmail them at any time. He could harass them. They were pretty much at his mercy! How can she expect Dipper to be okay with that? How?

But Mabel doesn’t look the slightest bit worried.

Mabel isn’t dumb. Dipper knows on some level she’s aware of how sensitive this whole thing is. So a big part of Dipper wishes he had been a fly on the wall during Mabel and Justin’s talk.

“You two were pretty chummy tonight,” he says in consideration. Thinking of how light hearted they seem when they walked into Dipper’s dorm, how at ease Justin was beside Mabel on the sofa, how they laughed and joked even with Dipper resting his head on Mabel’s thigh, and even how Mabel mercifully didn’t use Boo to steal Justin’s only star during their vintage gaming...

Whatever had went on between those two, things obviously had ended well.

“Oh Dipper,” Mabel chides, “You didn’t think I jumped ship on ya now, didja?”

He shrugs and shakes his head.

“You dork,” she huffs, attacking his sides the best she can with tickling fingers. He laughs and squirms, swatting her hands away.

“Yeah, okay. I’m sorry. I should’ve known better.”

“Darn tootin’.”

She smirks. Mabel then gives him a lazy but loving kiss. He returns the favor, languidly pecking her soft lips a second after hers left his. She then gives him another, and he gives her another over and over until they’ve spent a good two minutes playing lip tag. He isn’t really certain who stopped the game. He yawns, sluggishly kissing the space between her eyebrows.

He then gazes at her with half lidded eyes, his fingers caressing up and down her arm. Her soft skin is warm and smooth against his fingertips. A happiness only she can bring blooms inside him.

It suddenly hits him that this is it. This is their last night together until the semester ends. God, that’s so many days without being able to see her, touch her, make her laugh so violently she snorts and becomes red in the face. There’s going to be so many gray days ahead with her not by his side.

God, he’s going to miss her.

He’s going to miss her a billion times more than usual now.

His lips once again find hers in the dark, pouring what little energy he has left into it. She gently bites his lower lip, and he moans softly into her. He locks his arms around her frame, bringing her as close as she could possibly get to him, their fronts molded together. His tongue slowly explores her mouth, memorizing every contour and relishing the feeling of hers twirling with his. Her hips buck, and they both silently gasp. His hands are in her short tresses, kissing her deeper, with more passion.

This time he feels it coming.

He pulls away, turning his head opposite to her and sneezes loudly.

“Aw,” Mabel coos before laughing. “Bless you.”

“Thanks,” he sniffs. He tugs at the covers beneath them, wiggling until they are both hidden beneath the sheets. He then reaches over her, checking his alarm clock and setting it for the morning.

“I don’t wanna fall asleep,” she yawns. “Maybe if we stay up forever, tomorrow won’t come.”

“Your logic is kind of flawed, Mabel.”

“Ah, c’mon Dip. You could’ve at least played along.”

Her eyes drift closed, her lips curved in a smile. He kisses her forehead before laying his head back on his pillow.

“Good night, Mabel.”

“Nighty night, Dipper.”

“I love you.”

“Loving you too, bro-friend.”

Dipper smiles and closes his eyes, easily falling asleep with Mabel wrapped up in his arms.

Part 9

The early morning air is chilled with fog. The sun, hidden behind clouds of gray, barely lights up the world around them as they slide into the yellow car. The asphalt streets are slick, and the dewy scent of grass follows them inside the vehicle.

The cab ride to the airport is mostly silent. Justin snores softly, falling in and out of sleep with his forehead pressed against the window. Mabel, who's sitting in the middle, leans her head on Dipper's shoulder. Their fingers are laced together, his thumb caressing calming circles over her knuckles. Every now and then he brings their joined hands up to his lips, kissing hers and whispering that he loves her. His free hand is wrapped around her, holding her close to his side. He had woken up with her in his arms. They shared languid kisses in his bed until his beeping alarm clock became too hard to ignore. But even when they stumbled out of bed to get dressed, Mabel slipping into her teal shorts with her back to him, he kept pulling her into hugs and kisses.

He never wants to let go.

But he has to.

When they arrive at the airport, Dipper tells the driver to give them a minute as they ease out the back seat. Justin sleepily points to the entrance, indicating that he'll wait inside for Mabel as he drags their luggage away.

Dipper sighs, wishing he didn't have to say goodbye so soon. But his first class of the day will be starting soon enough, and as much as he wants to say *fuck it* and miss the class altogether so he could at least sit with her in the airport... He can't.

Her plane will be taking off soon enough, and Dipper can only go so far with her through security. Plus, he's getting his midterm paper back today. And he always felt a little guilty when he skipped a class, since it's basically money being wasted.

And it wouldn't be any easier saying goodbye to his sister then, than it would be now. In fact, he might do something stupid, like buy a plane ticket and skip the rest of the semester.

Looking into her warm eyes, he smiles weakly. She smiles back, a sad chortle escaping her. She bites her lip as she smiles, nudging his shoulder.

“If you’re gonna run dramatically through the airport to stop me from getting on the plane, you can save yourself the trouble of being tackled by security by making your grand declaration of love now.”

Dipper laughs, rolling his eyes.

“If I’m going to stop you from getting on a plane, it would be to ask you to stay,” he tells her, his cheeks becoming warm. “But you know, got to go get that diploma or whatever.”

“*Blah*,” Mabel whines, dropping her head to his chest. “Responsibility is *the worst*.”

“Yeah, it is.”

They laugh. Dipper glances at the running taxi, and Mabel looks at the time. They both sigh.

They find themselves in an embrace, squeezing each other tight. He buries his face into hair, inhaling the sweet scent of it.

“I’m going to miss you, Mabel.”

She pulls away slightly, their arms still locked around each other. She smiles up at him, making his insides all warm.

She kisses his left cheek. And then his right. She even pecks the tip of his nose, and he smiles back at her. Her eyes dropped down to his mouth, and then her lips are pressed against his. He holds her tighter against him, one hand on the small of her back, the other diving up into her hair. She sucks on his bottom lip, the yearning in his gut growing stronger. His tongue rolls into her mouth, hers meeting his with enthusiasm. It’s amazing how warm and sweet she is, in every since.

“Ew, get a room,” a passerby grumbles, and the twins suddenly remember that they’re in public. This, however, doesn’t stop a giggling Mabel from peppering a few quick kisses on Dipper’s lips and cheeks.

He laughs breathlessly, simply because he doesn’t really know what else to do. She’s still firmly in his embrace, her hands rubbing comforting circles on his back.

“I’m gonna miss you too, Bro. But hey, Thanksgiving break is just around the corner.”

“True,” he agrees, resting his forehead against hers. “But I’m still going to miss you like crazy. Even more than before, now that we’re... I love you so much.”

“I love you too,” she whispers, giving him one last squeeze before breaking the hug, taking a step back. He looks at her with sad eyes, and she laughs unevenly, punching his arm even as her eyes mist up. “You dork, stop looking at me like that. I’m not dying. *Yeesh*.”

Dipper chuckles wistfully, digging his hands into his coat pockets.

“Yeah, yeah. I know.”

She kisses him again before shrugging and cocking her head at the door. He nods, stealing one more kiss before saying goodbye.

He watches her walk to the door. She turns halfway, giving him a large smile as she waves. He waves back, but suddenly she’s hurdling towards him, and he almost falls over when she collides into his chest. She grabs either side of his face, kissing him senseless. But then her lips are gone, her warmth following suit, and it takes his clouded over brain a moment to realize she’s skipping away, laughing.

“Call me when you land,” he hears himself yelling, blinking out of his stupor.

“Of course, Bro-friend! Call me, beep me, if ya wanna reach me!”

And he does. When he gets her text that she landed safely, he anxiously twirls the silver moon of his necklace until he’s out of class and can call her. She answers on the first ring with a laugh that made him smile.

Their old calling regime falls back into place, with Dipper unafraid to call or text her whenever he felt lonely or just wanted to hear her voice. And he’s glad Mabel does the same, even though sometimes she’ll wake him with a text at three a.m. Sometimes she even calls him that late into the night, but he couldn’t help but smile when he sees her face on the screen of his phone under *Incoming Call*. Groggily he greets her, and she’ll whisper how much she misses him into the phone.

And every now and then, between laughing about something that happened at school and their hushed confessions of missing each other, their conversations get a bit... heated. Heated to the point where Dipper eventually got awkward, barely able to string simple sentences together while Mabel chuckles. But then words become unnecessary, and Dipper’s eyes will close as he listens to her ragged breathing. All of which leaving Dipper a sweaty, red faced mess in his bed, Mabel’s labored giggling tickling inside his ear.

“I think I liked it better when you guys we’re being secretive,” Jean mutters after he knocks on Dipper’s door for the second time, reminding him that it’s game night.

“Yeah, yeah. I’m coming,” Dipper yells at the door before moving the his cell’s receiver back in place, getting an earful of Mabel snickering.

“Ha! I think you should go, Dip, before your boyfriend blows a gasket.”

Dipper snorts out a laugh, rolling his eyes. “He can wait.”

“Nah, it’s fine. I should get off anyway. Gotta finishing packing. I’ll text ya later, Bro-friend.”

“Oh, okay.” He cradles the phone closer to his face, whispering sweetly, “I love you, Mabels.”

“Love you too, Dipping sauce,” she responds, her voice just as soft and tender. His fingers twist at his necklace, the image of her twirling the star of hers entering his brain and his smile widens. Even after they end the call, he sits on his bed for a while with that goofy grin on his face.

“You started without me,” Dipper states the obvious when he walks out his room to find Jean button smashing a game controller. He joins his roommate on the couch, still feeling high from talking with Mabel.

Jean shrugs. Dipper watches him play for a bit, helping himself to the bowl of chips on the coffee table.

“Who are you playing with?” Dipper asks, watching as Jean’s character and his partner run through some sort of jungle. “A computer?”

“Nah, it’s your friend Justin,” Jean tells him, eyes train on the TV. “We’ve been talking a bit online and junk.”

Dipper nods. After Mabel left all those weeks ago, Dipper had gotten a friend request from Justin on almost every social networking site. Justin must had done the same to Jean, who had obviously accepted them, unlike Dipper.

Dipper doesn’t correct Jean about Justin being his friend. Instead, he eats another chip.

“He’s a pretty cool dude. Funny,” Jean adds with a shrug of his shoulders. Dipper rolls his eyes.

So he’s been told.

But Dipper couldn’t help but not like the guy, despite how friendly Justin is. He is Mabel’s ex, after all. But, even though he’s kind of annoying and a bit weird, he hasn’t been vindictive at all. And he’s not being a jerk about his and Mabel secret, so...

“Yeah, he’s okay.”

Jean’s phone buzzes, causing the wild haired boy to grin and pause the game to check it. Since Dipper’s right next to him, he can see that the text is from Ann. One of many, it seems. Dipper’s eyes Jean questioningly, wondering when the two had even started talking again.

But whatever. He didn’t really care enough to ask. While his roommate’s distracted with typing out a reply, Dipper picks up his controller, un-pausing the game to toss a grenade at Justin’s character.

“Dude,” Jean laughs, abandoning his phone to wrestle the controller away from Dipper.

They stayed up all night playing games and eating junk food. It wasn’t until one in the morning that Mabel sent him that promised text: See ya soon! gobble gobble! ;D

The week of Thanksgiving is filled with quick kisses and stolen glances with knowing smiles. They were rarely alone at home during the break, and they couldn't do much in public on the off chance of running into old high school friends. Mainly Mabel's old friends. She had a ton of them. Still does, actually.

"We have to," Dipper pauses, breathing heavy and struggling to catch his breath after kissing Mabel. What was meant to be a simple peck became much more ardent. They had gotten a bit carried away, Dipper finding himself pinned against the fridge by Mabel. In a moment of panic, the two dashed into the kitchen pantry when they heard their father's heavy footsteps approaching.

"Our position's been compromised," Mabel had whispered into his ear, mimicking an FBI agent, when she pushed him inside. However, their dad finding them crammed together in here is probably much more suspicious than if they had simply jumped apart and pretended to be making a midnight snack or something. But whatever. Adrenalin is still pumping through Dipper's veins, and Mabel's body is still pressed against him. Even after waiting an eternity for their father to leave, Dipper still wants to keep kissing Mabel. So he does.

"We have to be more careful," he finally gets out.

She smiles, kissing his flushed face, but nods in agreement.

But it's nice just to be able to hold her hand underneath the table at Thanksgiving dinner, and sneak kisses before heading off to bed at night. But even that little slice of heaven is over soon enough, and they're back in school until Christmas break.

But those few weeks flew by in a blink, and Dipper's hauling bags back into his family home.

"Dipper!" Mabel calls out excitedly the moment he's inside. She runs into his arms for a bone crushing hug. His bags fall unceremoniously to the floor as he snugly wraps her up in his arms. He buries his face in her hair, taking a moment to inhale her sweet scent of vanilla and strawberries. They both laugh, and Dipper's seconds away from pulling her up into a kiss before remembering himself. He settles on giving her temple a quick peck before scooping up the discarded bags with one hand and intertwining Mabel's warm hand with the other. He greets his mother and father before scurrying upstairs to his old bedroom to give Mabel a proper reunion kiss.

And the days of Christmas break pass in a similar fashion as the last. On Christmas Eve, Mabel tiptoes into Dipper's room holding up a plate of freshly baked cookies. He smiles as she plops down beside him on his bed.

"Ho ho ho, have a cookie!" Mabel says in her best Santa voice, handing over the plate of gingerbread men and sugar cookies in the shapes of trees and stars. "Made them special, just for you."

Dipper nods in thanks. She's wearing a yellow sweater that rolled up at the sleeves with a picture of a watermelon slice on it, and pink shorts with green cuffs and black spots decorating it. All of which is covered in flour. She had just finished knitting up her Christmas sweater last night, a festive little number depicting Rudolph and his girlfriend, Clarice. She'll probably be changing into it soon. It'll match the antlers she's wearing in her hair now. Her chocolate curls have grown, now almost reaching her shoulders.

He picks up a gingerbread woman, admiring all the little details made with frosting and sprinkles before nibbling off one of her little legs.

"Dipper! You can't just eat Ginger like that! Geez, show some compassion."

"Oh? Well how am I suppose to eat it?" Dipper laughs, biting off Ginger's arms now.

"All at once! Duh. So she doesn't suffer."

He shakes his head, giving his sister a playful nudge. "You're so weird," he teases, but shoves the rest of the cookie in his mouth.

"No weirder than you, Dippy!"

She pushes him back, and they go back and forth shoving each other until Mabel slams him back onto the bed, her fingers tickling up his ribs. Dipper squirms and kicks underneath her relentless attack, laughing and gasping for air. The plate of cookies fall off the bed with a soft thud. The antlers slip off of her head, her brown tresses falling over them like a veil. She stops when his face becomes that perfect shade of pink, and smiles in victory as she waits for him to get his breathing under control.

But that's pretty much impossible. He's suddenly all too aware that she's straddling him, sitting on his stomach. Her face is hovering inches above him. In this cocoon of hair, all he can smell is Mabel. All he can see is her dilated eyes, and her pink lips. For a moment he wonders if this is a dream.

"Mabel?" he barely breathes, and she replies by inching upwards, her hands cupping his cheeks as her lips plants tender kisses on every star on his forehead. She makes her way down to his lips, tongue easing out to lazily dance with his, setting his insides ablaze. He loops his arms around her, nestling a hand in her hair while the other slides inside her sweater to caress the warm canvas of her back. She nibbles on his bottom lips, licking and sucking it too, drawing out a moan that comes straight from his chest. Mabel smiles against his lips before kissing him harder, stronger.

Her hands are so soft, so warm, as they run up and down his chest. She flicks his nipple, and he's surprised by how good that felt, how it made his body twitch. And now she's trailing searing kissing down his throat, nipping his clavicle, as she pushes up his shirt until his chest is bare. And it's not until she sits up, pressing her bum enticingly into his groin while she peels off her yellow sweater, that it registers in his clouded mind what's happening.

His eyes dart over to his closed door. Is it locked? Are their parents even home? His looks back at Mabel, eyes wide as he takes in the sight of her. Tousled hair. Kiss swollen lips. A powder blue bra with little penguins on it. A cool silver chain with a star resting in the valley of her breast. And so much soft, supple skin.

He gazes into her eyes, trying to somehow read her thoughts.

Is she really...? Are they actually about to...?

She smirks down at him, and oh god she's grinding on him. Okay, so this is happening.

He sits up, peppering kisses over every inch of skin he can reach. His hands roam her backside until he works himself up enough to try to unhook her bra. She giggles at his trembling fingers.

"I can unhook it, if ya want, bro."

"N-no. I can do it."

"You sure about that, Dip?" Mabel chuckles. "You seem to having some technical difficulties back there."

He sticks out his tongue, and she makes a face and they both laugh at their oddly childish behavior. But then her bra comes undone, the straps loosening. With a simple shimmy, her chest is revealed and his hands run down her back, around her waist, and up her stomach, leaving gooseflesh in their wake. His fingers hesitate, his thumb experimentally grazes over the pink nipple, teasingly pinching the nub until it hardens before cupping the mound and giving it a gentle squeeze.

She hums, almost purrs, in appreciation. It's such a lovely sound. One he's heard softly over the phone in the dead of night. And just like then it stirs something in the pit of stomach, shoots a bolt of desire straight to his groin, making it twitch. But unlike then, he can kiss her with all his might. Hold her tight while he murmurs her name into her chest. Her fingers massage his scalp as he gropes her.

He had a plan for this. For their first time together. But she's kicking off her shorts and underwear, and tugging down his pants. Her slender fingers are stroking his length, her thumb curiously circling the reddened tip. Her kisses are heady, and all he can think about is how much he missed her over the past few weeks, how much he's going to miss her when the new semester starts up; how much he loves her, and she loves him. How he desperately wanted her for so long. So his plans of being that gentle, deft lover is far, far away when she slide down on him, surrounding him in wet heat that made his body scream from him to move. She's too tight. His hands find their place on her waist, guiding her. His hips buck into hers as she rides him, occasionally pivoting hard and throwing off her rhythm which made her half laugh, half moan.

Watching her is too much. Her face contorted in pleasure. The bounce of her breast as she moves. Seeing himself disappear inside her over and over and... *Fuck.*

He squeezes his eyes shut, afraid he might cum right then and there. But he knows he's close, can feel the tingle of the coil tightening inside him. He latches his mouth onto a perky breast, tongue flicking pebbled flesh. His hand dives between them, blindly fingering until he finds the swollen bud, making Mabel shudder. Her hold on his hair becomes rough, using her gripe to steady herself as she slams into him. His breath is ragged, sweat forming on his brow. And he's fingers are feverishly rubbing her clit, a desperate moan escaping his lips.

Come on, come on!

Her walls clench around him, her back arching, a whimper escaping her lips.

Finally!

Dipper then makes a sound completely foreign to his ears. An almost feral sound he couldn't reproduce in a million years. His body trembles as she writhes over him. His arms instinctively holding her as they ride out their orgasms.

"Dipper," she breaths his name like its both a prayer and a curse. It makes his lips stretch into a smile. Her fingers lazily curl around the crescent moon of his necklace, her head resting on his chest. He can feel the rapid beating of her heart, so he has no doubt she can feel and hear his.

He barely has time to come down from cloud nine when their mother's voice calls up to them from the staircase, telling them to come down and clean the mess left from Mabel baking. They jolt out of bed, rushing for their clothes. Mabel opens the window to get rid of the 'wild monkey smell', as she put it, with her nose scrunched up. They couldn't help but laugh at one another, their rumpled clothes and wild hair making it all so obvious. They take a moment to properly straighten themselves out. Mabel's tugging her hair into a small braid as Dipper picks the once forgotten cookies off the floor.

"How long ya think we keep on rusing?" Mabel asks, eyeing the the door where their family awaits. Dipper freezes, a broken star cookie in his hand. How long could they keep up the charade of normalcy around their parents and hometown friends? Ruses weren't meant to last. Isn't that what he had said to himself when Mabel popped up announced at his dorm pretending to be his girlfriend?

He stands up, taking Mabel by the hand as he leads them out of his room to the flight of stairs. He leans down, his lips grazing the shell of her ear as he whispers,

"For as long as we want."

Epilogue

Twenty years later, Dipper laughs as he hangs up the phone, placing it on the bedside table. Mabel strolls into their bedroom, fresh from a shower, flopping down on the mattress. She discards her fuzzy pink robe, immediately cuddles up next to him, and runs her feet up and down the length of his calves. He watches the mole on her ankle as she does this.

“What so funny?” she asks, index finger tapping his nose. He catches her hand before she can retract it, dropping a kiss over the promise ring he’d given her years ago, before lacing up their fingers to rest in his lap.

“Nothing. Was just talking to a friend from work. Wanted to set me up on a date. Says living life as a bachelor with my sister isn’t healthy.”

“Ugh, he sounds like Mom.” Mabel chuckles, rolling her eyes. She pokes his ribs with her free hand, “But what do they know, eh? You’re gonna be an old fart with me in a retirement home, aren’t ya, Dip? We’ll be two old biddies. Spinsters. Never married, playing gin for teeth and prune juice.”

He smiles and nods, smacking her prodding finger away. He moves to lay down fully in bed, pulling Mabel closer so they can spoon. He drops a kiss on her neck, not really caring how they managed to fool everyone for so long. Two old biddies, huh? No one ever knowing their supposedly lonely lives was filled with love and scandal. Dipper laughs to himself, snuggling closer to Mabel.

“Yeah, okay,” he mumbles as he closes his eyes for the night. “We can do that, easy. A life long ruse.”

THE END.